















THE  
**H E R O I N E,**

OR  
ADVENTURES

OF  
**CHERUBINA,**

BY  
EATON STANNARD BARRETT, ESQ.

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“ L'Histoire d'une femme est toujours un Roman.”

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Second Edition,

WITH CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS.

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*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. II.

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## THE HEROINE.



## LETTER XIII.

ABOUT an hour ago, I was amusing myself with the Children of the Abbey; and just as I had read the scene where Amanda conceals Belgrave in the closet, Betterton came into my chamber, and the landlady after him with a bundle.

“Has my fair friend ever seen a masquerade?” said he, as he sat down.

“Never,” answered I; “but there is nothing I would rather see.”

“Then,” said he, “as a masquerade is to

take place at the Pantheon to-morrow night, I will do myself the honour of escorting you thither; and your hostess shall matronize you. So now to call a council of dress. What think you of personating Sterne's Maria?"

"No character could please me more," replied I.

"Then," said he, "do me the favour to accept this dress;" and opening the bundle, he presented me with a most elegant and suitable costume.

"And here," continued he, "is a dress for the Widow Wadman, which character your good landlady will enact; and here is Trim's antique and tarnished regimental coat, and Montero cap, for myself. And now, my dear Madam, promise to keep this expedition a profound secret from Stuart."

“ And from Grundy too,” added the landlady.

“ Why from Grundy ?” asked I.

“ Because,” said she, “ he might disapprove of my going without himself.”

“ And what were that to you ?” cried I.

“ Why, Ma’am,” answered she, “ to be very candid with you, he and I are betrothed together in marriage.”

“ Betrothed !” exclaimed I.

But a tap at my door prevented me from expressing my decided doubts of her veracity ; and it struck me, that should the person outside be his Lordship, I might make her look excessively silly on the occasion.

“ Here, hide yourselves in this dark closet,” whispered I to my visitors.

“ I have particular reasons.” They looked at each other, and hesitated.

“ In, in !” said I ; “ for I suspect that this visit is from a villain ; and I wish you to witness what passes.”

They went into the closet. I then opened the door of my chamber, and the poet appeared at it, with his eyes half out of their sockets, and his jaw ajar.

“ What is the matter ?” asked I.

He gaped still wider, but said nothing.

“ Speak !” cried I. “ What shock awaits me ? For what horror are you preparing me ?”

“ Oh Miss !” exclaimed he ; “ oh Miss, Miss ! Don’t go to the masquerade, Miss. Oh, don’t Miss. My mamma has just overheard the gen-



tleman who visited you yesterday — Betterton, methinks, is his appellation,—planning with the landlady, to carry you from it by fraudulence or by force. But, Miss, I have a fine sword above stairs, three feet and a half long, and I will rub off the rust, and ——”

Another tap came at my door. I was in a hiding mood. Already the scene promised wonders; and I resolved not to damp its rising spirit; so made the simple Higginson wedge himself underneath the sofa.

The next moment my door opened, and to my great delight Montmorenci entered.

“Sweet is the dawn of morning,” cried he; “sweet is the song of the lark; sweet is the odour of the floweret; but ah! far sweeter is the face of my love.”

“And yet, Sir,” said I, with a freezing smile, “as there are many mornings, many larks, and many flowerets, so there are many loves.”

“To me there is but one,” cried he.

“And that one?” said I.

“Need I mention?”

“Need you hesitate?”

“You, you alone!” exclaimed he.

“And oh, wherefore should you doubt my constancy?”

“That interjectoral, Oh! may be very pretty,” said I, “but it cannot refute fact, or eradicate suspicion.”

“Why then,” cried he, “by the fat-cheeked little cherubim, that flap their innocent wings, and fly through oceans of air in a minute, without having a hair of their heads discomposed——”

“Now,” said I, “you are all this time considering what to say. But I will relieve you. Our hostess is a charming woman, very charming, remarkably charming indeed. You love her, Sir; and I felicitate you on your choice. Yes, a letter of lodgings is an admirable match for an understrapping actor.”

“Love our hostess?” cried he: “I love our hostess? What! that pale decent woman, worn to a thread-paper? ’Tis true she has roses in her cheek, and lilies in her skin; but they are white roses, and orange lilies. Our hostess! Beshrew my heart, I would let cobwebs grow on her lips, before I would kiss them.”

A knock at the hall-door interrupted us.

“ If this be the person I suspect,” exclaimed I, “ both of us are undone—separated for ever !”

“ Who ? what ? which ? where shall I hide ?” cried his Lordship.

“ Yon dark closet,” said I, pointing. “ Fly !”

His Lordship sprang into the closet, and closed the door.

“ I can hear no tidings of your father,” said Stuart, entering the moment after. “ I have searched every hotel in Town, and I really fear that some accident——”

“ Mercy upon me ! who’s here ?” cried his Lordship from the closet. Oons ! let me go ; whoever the devil you are, let me go !”

“ Take that—and that—and that : you, you, you—Oh you, you,—you

poor, pitiful, fortune-hunting play-actor!" screamed the landlady, buffet-  
ing him about.

That unhappy young nobleman bolted from the closet, with his face running blood, and the landlady fast at his heels.

"Yes, you dog!" exclaimed she, "I have discovered your treacherousness at last. So you bring your Miss into my house as your cousin, and make love to her; and all the time are promising me marriage, and sending me letters and trinkets!"

"I cannot believe he was so base, Madam," said I.

"But he was so base," Madam, said she. "There, read the letter he sent me yesterday, just after I had asked him to pay me for six months' diet and lodging."

I read :

“ Accept the pair of bracelets which accompany this note, and rest assured I will discharge my bill before another month.

“ Before another month, too, I trust the manager will enlarge my salary. Then, emancipated from poverty, I need no longer delay that happiness which I anticipate, in leading my lovely hostess to the hymeneal altar.

“ Your own, own, own,

“ ABRAHAM GRUNDY.”

It was as much as I could do to suppress my indignation at this letter; but the heroine prevailed, and I merely cast on his lordship, my famous compound expression of contempt, pity, and beautiful rebuke; which I tinged with just fascination enough to remind

him, what a jewel he had thrown away. Meantime he stood wiping his face, and did not utter a word.

“And now,” cried I, “now for the grand developement. James Higginson, come forth !”

In a moment the poet was seen, creeping, like a huge tortoise, from under the sofa.

“Mr. Higginson,” said I, “did not your mother tell you, that this amiable lady,” (and I courtesied low to the hostess, and she still lower to me), “that this best of women,” (and again we exchanged rival courtesies), “is plotting with Mr. Betterton, to betray me into his hands at the masquerade ?”

“Madam,” answered the poet, “I do certify and asseverate, that so my mamma told me.”

“Then your mamma told you a confounded falsehood!” cried Betterton, popping out of the closet.

Higginson walked up to him, and knocked him down with the greatest gravity imaginable. The hostess ran at Higginson, and fastened her fangs in his face. Montmorenci laid hold of the hostess, and off came her wig. Stuart dropped into a chair with laughter. I too forgot both grace and grief; and clapped my hands, and danced with delight, while they kicked and scratched each other without mercy.

At length Stuart interfered, and separated the combatants. The landlady retired to refit her dismantled head; and his Lordship and Higginson to wash their wounds. Betterton too was about taking his departure.



“ Sir,” said Stuart, “ I must beg leave to detain you a few moments.”

Betterton bowed, and returned.

“ Your name is Betterton, I believe.”

“ It is, Sir,”

“ After Mr. Higginson’s accusation of you,” said Stuart, “ I feel myself entitled, as the friend of this lady’s father, to insist upon your soliciting her forgiveness for the designs which you have harboured against her ; and to demand an unequivocal renunciation of them.”

“ You are an honest fellow,” said Betterton, “ and I respect your spirit. Most sincerely, most humbly, Miss Wilkinson, do I beg your pardon ; and I trust you will believe, that nothing but a misrepresentation of your real character and history tempted me to

treat you with such undeserved insult. I now declare, that you need not fear any farther improprieties from me."

"But before I can feel perfectly satisfied," said Stuart, "I must stipulate for the discontinuance of your visits to Miss Wilkinson, as a proof that you have relinquished all improper projects against her."

"I had formed that resolution before you spoke," answered Betterton. "Now we are friends. Faults I may have; but my heart—(and he tapped at it with his forefinger) all is right here."

With these words he bowed and retired. Stuart then began exhorting me to leave my lodgings; but I felt so much irritated at his officious interference about Betterton, that I would not even answer him. Finding all his efforts fruitless, he went

away quite offended ; and I greatly fear will never return.

Well, I am the most unfortunate girl that ever breathed ! Think now, after all my prospects, to find myself on a sudden, deserted by every individual, who had talent and baseness enough for conducting my plot ! Stuart takes upon him to turn off Betterton. Betterton is so wretchedly sneaking as to be turned off by him : then Stuart himself makes his bow and exit : and lastly, Mr. Montmorenci comes out to be——But I will not believe it. No, his intrigue with the landlady must involve some mystery or other, which a distracting interview will elucidate.

I confess I feel predisposed to credit any reasonable excuse which he can

assign, rather than find myself deceived, outrivalled, and deprived of a lover, not alone dear to my heart, but indispensable to my memoirs.

Then, that closet scene, which contained within itself the seeds of the true pathetic, what a bear-garden it became ! In short, I feel disgusted with the world. I half wish I were at home again. Do you know, since I have seen Stuart, I cannot avoid sometimes picturing the familiar fire-side, the walks, frolics, occupations of our childhood ; and well I remember how he used to humour my whims.

But whither am I wandering ? Pardon these homely sentiments. They escaped my pen. I am not often guilty of vulgarity. Forgive them.

Adieu.

## LETTER XIV.

ALL is as I thought. My Montmorenci has proved himself the most aspersed of men; and has convinced me that the letter to the landlady was a FORGERY, written by herself. The wretch! He thinks of prosecuting her, next term.

As I had refused, after the closet scene to hear his personal vindication, he wrote, I answered; and the following is an extract from our correspondence. Having first penned a most satisfactory disquisition on the various circumstances tending to prove the forgery, he thus concludes :

— — — — —

“ I have begun twenty letters, and have torn them all. I write on my knees, and the paper is blistered with my tears ; but I have dried it with my sighs.

“ When the girl brought your last note, the idea that your eyes had just been dwelling on her face, on her cap, ribbon, apron, made her and them so interesting, so dear to me, that though her face was smutty, her cap tattered, her ribbon green (which I hate), and her apron greasy, I should certainly have taken her in my arms, had I not been the most bashful of men.

“ Though that note pierced my very heart, the words were hosts of angels to me, and the small paper the interminable regions of bliss. Any thing from you !

“How my heart beats, and my blood boils in my veins, when by chance, our feet meet under the table. How often I call to mind the sweet reproof you once gave me at dinner, when I trod on your toe in a transport.

“If you love me, tell me so,’ said you, smiling; ‘but do not hurt my foot.’

“Another little incident is always recurring to me. As we parted from each other, the night before last, you said, in a voice soft as the Creolian lyre, ‘Good night, my dear Montmorenci.’ It was the first time you had ever called me *dear*. The sound sank into my heart. I have repeated it a hundred times since; and when I went to bed, I said, good night, my dear Montmorenci. I recollected myself and laughed.”

## BILLET FROM CHERUBINA.

He who could be capable of writing the letter, could be capable of calling it a forgery.

## BILLET FROM MONTMORENCI.

Misery with you, were better than happiness without you.

## BILLET FROM CHERUBINA.

Treachery and hatred were better than love and treachery.

## BILLET FROM MONTMORENCI.

Love is heaven and heaven is love.

## BILLET FROM CHERUBINA.

If heaven be love, I fear heaven is not eternal.



## BILLET FROM MONTMORENCI.

If my mind be kept in suspense, my body shall be suspended too.

## BILLET FROM CHERUBINA.

Foolish youth! If my life be dear to thee, attempt not thine own.

## BILLET FROM MONTMORENCI.

It were easier to kill myself than to fly from Cherubina.

## BILLET FROM CHERUBINA.

LIVE. I believe you innocent.

## BILLET FROM MONTMORENCI.

Angelic girl! But how can I live without the means? My landlady threatens me with an arrest. Heloise lent money to St. Preux.

## BILLET FROM CHERUBINA.

In enclosing to you half of all I have, I feel, alas ! that I am but half as liberal of my purse as of my heart.

## BILLET FROM MONTMORENCI.

I promise to pay Lady Cherubina de Willoughby, or order, on demand, the sum of thirty-five pounds sterling, value received.

MONTMORENCI.

Soon after I had received this last billet, his Lordship came in person, to perfect the reconciliation ; and when he left me, the landlady called, made an abject apology for her conduct, and instead of desiring me to leave her house, advised me so violently to remain, that I much suspect her of some sinister motive.

About dusk, a letter was brought to me by the maid, who said, that a man in a cloak, put it into her hand, and then ran away.

Conceive my sensations on reading this note, written in antiquated characters.

To the  
Lady Cherubina de Willoughby.

These, greeting.

Most fayre Ladie,

An aunciente and loyall Massall  
that crewhyles appertained unto p<sup>re</sup>  
ryghte noble Muncestrie, in p<sup>re</sup> qua-  
litie of Seneschal, hath, by chaunce,  
discovered p<sup>re</sup> place of hiding, and  
doth crave p<sup>re</sup> boon that you will  
not fayle to goe alone and withouten

a visor, unto y<sup>e</sup> Masquerade at y<sup>e</sup> Pantheon; where, anon he will join you, and unravell divers mysterys touching your pedigree.

What a crisis is at hand! Yes, thou excellent old man, I will meet thee there. Adieu.

## LETTER XV.

LAST night, soon after I had retired to rest, I heard a whispering and rustling outside my window, which looks into the yard; and while I was awaiting the result, sleep surprised me.

This morning, I woke earlier, as I thought, than usual; for not a ray penetrated my curtainless window. I

therefore tried to take another slumber, but in vain. I lay turning and tumbling about, eight or nine hours longer. At last I became alarmed. What can be the matter? thought I. Is the sun quenched or eclipsed? or has the globe ceased rolling? or am I struck stone blind?

But amidst my conjectures, a sudden cry of fire! fire! rang through the house. I sprang out of bed, huddled on me whatever clothes came to hand, and then rushed into the outer room; where my eyes were almost blinded by the sudden glare of light that shot through them.

However, I had presence of mind enough to snatch up Corporal Trim's coat, which still remained there, and to slip it on me; for I had no gown underneath; and besides I recollected

that Harriet Byron, at a moment of distress, went wild about the country, in masquerade.

As I ran into the hall, I saw the street-door wide open, Stuart and Montmorenci struggling with each other near it, the landlady dragging a trunk down stairs, and looking like the ghost of a mad housemaid; and the poet just behind her, with his crippled mother, bed and bed-clothes, upon his back; she crying, I shall soon be in Heaven, and he crying, Heaven forbid! I darted by them, thence out of the house, and (will you believe me?) had fled twenty paces, before I discovered, that, so far from being night, it was broad, bright, obvious, incontrovertible day!

I had no time to reflect on this mys-

tery, as I heard steps pursuing me, and my name called. I fled the faster, for I dreaded I knew not what. The portentous darkness of my room, the false alarm of fire, all betokened some diabolical conspiracy against my life; so I rushed along the street, to the horror and astonishment of all who saw me. For conceive me drest in a long-skirted scarlet coat, stiff with brassy lace; a satin petticoat, and my flaxen hair flaunting like a streamer, behind me!

Stop her, stop her! was now shouted on all sides. Hundreds seemed in pursuit. Panting, and almost exhausted, I still continued my flight. They gained upon me. What should I do? I saw the door of a carriage just opened; and two ladies, dressed for dinner, stepping into it. I sprang after them,

crying, save me, save me! They screamed. The footman endeavoured to drag me out; I held fast: the mob gathered round shouting; and at last, the horses, frightened by the tumult, set off in an unmanageable gallop.

All this time the ladies supported one unbroken scream, and shrinking back, held their hands between themselves and me.

“ Pray be not alarmed,” cried I, “ for I am only a Heroine ; and if you will have patience, you shall hear my story.

“ My name is Cherubina, and I am descended from the noble house of De Willoughby. But alas! by the machinations of vile conspirators, all my fair prospects are overturned—”

At this moment the carriage itself



was overturned, and my story along with it. Several persons immediately ran forward, and extracted us through the door. Again I began running, and again a mob was at my heels. I felt certain they would tear me in pieces. On I flew. Knock it down! cried several voices.

A footman was just entering a house; I rushed by him, and darted into a parlour, where a large party were at dinner.

“Save me!” exclaimed I, and sank on my knees before them. All arose:—some, in springing to seize me, fell; and others began dragging me away. Quite bewildered, I grasped at the table-cloth, and the next instant, the whole dinner was strewn about the floor. Those who had fallen down, rose in

piteous plight; one reeking with soup, another crowned with vegetables, and the face of a third all over harico.

They held me fast, and questioned me; then called me mad, and turned me into the street. The mob, who were still waiting for me there, cheered me as I came out; so seeing a shop at hand, I ran through it, up the stairs, and into the drawing-room.

There I found a mother in the cruel act of whipping her child. Ever a victim to sensibility, I snatched the rod from her hand; she shrieked and alarmed the house; and again I was turned out of doors. Again, my friend the mob, received me with a shout; again I took to flight; rushed through another shop, was turned out—though another, was turned out. In short, I

paid flying visits to twenty different houses, and witnessed twenty different domestic scenes. In this, they were singing, in that scolding:—here, I caught an old man kissing the maid, there, I found a young man reading the Bible. Entering another, I heard ladies laughing and dancing. I hurried past them to the garrets, and saw their aged servant dying.

Shocked by the sight, I paused at his half-opened door. Not a soul was in the room, and vials and basins strewed the table.

“Is that my daughter?” said he feebly. “Will nobody go for my daughter? To desert me thus, after first breaking my heart! Well then, I will go for her myself.”

He made a sudden effort to rise, but

it was fatal. His head and arms dropped down motionless, and hung out of the bed. He gave a convulsive sob, and expired.

Horrorstruck, I rushed into an adjoining garret; my heart and my brain were almost bursting. I felt guilty of I knew not what; and the picture of Wilkinson, dying in the madhouse, and calling upon his daughter, shot across me for a moment.

The noise of people searching the rooms below, and ascending the stairs, interrupted my disagreeable reflections; and I thought but of escape. Running to the window of the garret, I found that it looked upon the roof of a neighbouring house. Any thing rather than encounter the mob again; so I lifted the sash, and with some difficulty, made

good my landing below. I then closed it after me, and ran along the leads.

At last I was stopped by a house higher than the rest, with a small window, similar to the other out of which I had escaped. This window happily lay open ; so, looking into the garret, and finding nobody there, up I scrambled, entered, and then fastened the sash. A bed, a chair, a table, and a spacious chest, constituted all the furniture. The chest had nothing in it, but some rotten silks and satins ; and I determined to make it my place of refuge, on any emergency.

I sat a few moments, and composed my spirits ; then curious to discover whether I had any chance of escaping through the house after nightfall, I determined on exploring it. Besides, I

felt a secret presentiment that this house was, some way or other, connected with my fate—a most natural idea.

I first traversed the garrets, but observed nothing particular in them ; so I stole, with cautious steps, down to the first landing-place, and found the door of a room open. Hearing no noise inside, I put in my head, and perceived a large table, lighted with candles, and covered with half-finished dresses of various descriptions ; besides bonnets, feathers, caps, and ribbons ; whence I concluded that the people were milliners.

Here I sat some time, admiring the dresses, and trying at a mirror, how the caps became me ; till I was interrupted by steps on the stairs. I ran immedi-

ately behind a window-curtain ; and two young milliners came into the room.

I found by their conversation, that one of them was making a dress for the masquerade, after the pattern of the Tuscan girl's, as described in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*.

Conceive my horror, when I recollected, that this was, indeed, the night of the masquerade, appointed by the Seneschal, for unravelling the mystery of my birth ! How should I escape ? Where had I a dress ? What should I do ? Distraction !

As I stood pondering a thousand schemes, one of the milliners left the room : but the other, who was finishing the Tuscan habit, still remained.

Aware that were I to attempt an escape, I might be caught, and confined, as a thief, the whole of this important night, I suddenly determined upon making a friend of the milliner, and obtaining her assistance to quit the house. No sooner planned than accomplished. I drew aside the curtain, and stood before her.

She raised her head, made a miserable imitation of the heroic scream, and ran down stairs.

I ran after her, as far as the landing-place ; and on looking over the bannisters, into the hall, I saw a maid issue from the kitchen, and ask what was the matter.

“ Matter enough ! ” cried the terrified milliner. “ There is a madwoman above stairs, dressed half like a man,



half like a woman, and with hair down to the ground." And so saying, she ran into the parlour.

"What is all this?" cried a second maid, who now appeared.

"Oh! Molly," said the first maid, "Miss Jane is just frightened to death by a monster above stairs, half man, half woman, and covered all over with hair!"

The mistress herself then came from the shop.

"Oh! Madam," cried the second maid, "Miss Jane is just killed by a great, huge, horrid monster above stairs, half man, half beast, all over covered with curly hair, and every sort of abomination and bedevilment."

"Folly!" cried the mistress. "I warrant I will soon put an end to these

pranks ;” and she began ascending the stairs. Where could I hide ? I luckily recollected the large chest ; and up I flew to the garret. It was now quite dark ; but I found the chest, sprang into it, and having closed the lid, flung some of the old satins over me.

The moment after, “ Edward, Edward !” whispered the mistress, just outside the garret.

“ Here I am,” answered the voice of a young gentleman, in another garret. “ How came you to delay so late ?”

“ And how came you to dress yourself up, and frighten the girl ?” said she. “ Here is the whole house in an uproar. For shame ! had they discovered you, my character was gone for ever.”

“ Upon my soul,” cried he, “ I was

never once out of the garret; nor did I see a single being, though I thought I heard a foot on the stairs."

"Oh, mercy!" exclaimed she, "then as sure as fate, there is a monster in the house.—A wild beast, I am certain; for 'tis all over the most horrible, abominable hair, and I heard it howling from the very shop! Here, here, hasten with me, till I hide you safe, and then call the watch."

To my great alarm, they came running into my garret; to my still greater dismay, they approached the chest; but how shall I describe my unutterable horror, when the gentleman jumped into it, and the mistress locked both of us up together!

All was the work of an instant. Down she ran.

Almost crushed by his weight, I could not help making a sudden and desperate effort to get from under him.

“Heaven and earth!” exclaimed he, feeling about. “What is this? Who is this? Holloa, I say. Who are you?”

I lay still, and said nothing.

“Help, help!” vociferated he. “’Tis the beast—Here is the hair. Help, help!”

“Hush!” said I, “or both of us are betrayed. Upon my word, I am no beast, but a woman.”

“What woman, then?”

“That is a mystery.”

“What brings you here?”

“That is a mystery.”

“Are you young?”

“Yes.”

“Handsome?”

“That is another mystery.”

“Why then curse me if I don’t unravel it this moment!”

But now we heard several persons upon the stairs.

“Hush!” whispered I.

We lay quiet. They came into the room, and examined it; then tried the remaining garrets; and at last, to my great relief, returned down stairs.

“I suspect,” said the gentleman, “that you are the very person who has raised all this uproar.”

“I fear so, indeed,” answered I; “though really, without any evil design upon my part; as I trust you will acknowledge, when you hear my history.

“My father was a nobleman—illustrious, powerful, and wealthy;—blest

in a beloved wife, and in the playful endearments of my infantine innocence. But ah, who can say, to-day I am happy, and happy will I be to-morrow? For amidst this fatal calm, I was privately inveigled from his castle, by the wretch between whom and the title I stood; and my assassination was actually concerted; as a parchment now in my possession, will prove to a demonstration."

"Oh, what shall I do?" muttered the young man.

"Ha!" exclaimed I, "what is this I hear? Speak, Sir; Are you a party concerned?"

"In the devil's name, who are you?" cried he.

"Now don't you know?" said I.

"Not I, from my soul."

“ But can’t you guess ? ”

“ Not for the life of me can I form the most remote notion ! ”

“ Then I am sure,” said I, “ I have already told you enough to convince you, that I am a Heroine—one of those fair unfortunates, whom we read of in romances. I am, upon my honour. To-night, at the masquerade, the mystery of my birth is to be unfolded ; and to-morrow, I trust that the wretched Cherubina, released from thralldom, and restored to the tender arms of her family, will attest the justice of this sensible maxim, — Innocence, though vexed awhile by the storms of misfortune——”

“ Now may the merciful powers protect and rescue me ! ” ejaculated he, gathering himself up into a ball ; “ for ’tis a Bedlamite broken loose ! ”

And now, between terror and want of air, the poor fellow appeared on the very point of suffocation. He gasped, and groaned, kicked and struggled, and called help, help! with the most piercing utterance; when, in the acme of his agony, the chest, on a sudden, was unlocked, opened; and the mistress herself, holding a candle, appeared over us.

The gentleman darted, like an arrow, out of the chest. I rose from it more slowly.

“What is that? What thing is that?” cried the mistress, grasping his arm, and shrinking back.

“The wretch who has frightened you all,” said he. “A dreadful mad-woman!”

“What upon this good earth can be done?” cried the mistress.



“ I will tell you, Madam,” answered I. “ Your character is in my power. This gentleman cannot leave the house without my first alarming it ; and if I am myself seized, you must appear to prosecute, and must swear that you locked him up in the chest. Now listen : Only furnish me with decent apparel, and suffer me to quit the house quietly, and on the word of a Heroine, I will not betray your intrigue. There is that dress of the Tuscan girl. I want it for the masquerade. Name your terms. We shall not differ.”

“ Gracious me !” exclaimed she, wringing her hands, “ what in this wide world shall I do ?”

“ Do ?” cried I. “ Why sell me the dress of course. Sure the whole scene, since I came into this house, was ob-

viously contrived for the especial purpose of my procuring that individual dress; and just conceive the ridiculous effect, if, after all, I do not get it. Let me tell you, 'tis a serious thing for a heroine like me, to appear at a masquerade, in a corporal's coat. Here, now, whole nations will be reading this incident; and I just ask you, as a matter of feeling, could you bear their united execrations? Surely, when they shall have read as far as up to this moment, they cannot but suppose, that I must obtain the dress; and if this be their idea, woe betide her who disappoints them! What can you answer to arguments so reasonable?"

"That the person who could use them," said she, "will never listen to reason. I see what is the matter with

you, and that I have no alternative, but to humour you, or be ruined.’’

In a word, I got the Tuscan dress, slipped it on me, promised payment; and then, conducted down by the mistress (who thought she could never lose me too soon), I bade her good evening, and once more issued into the street.

I dared not venture back to my former lodgings, lest the conspirators there should keep me from the masquerade; so having called a coach, I drove to Jerry Sullivan’s.

The poor Irishman jumped with joy when he saw me; but I found him in much distress. His creditors had threatened an execution on his little shop, unless he would immediately discharge his debts; and he was now quite un-

able to complete the necessary sum. Thirty pounds were still wanting. I had somewhat more than this, at my lodgings; and I determined that I would relieve him. I therefore dispatched him with a letter, requesting of my landlady to give the bearer my clothes, jewels, parchment, picture, and money; and bidding her deduct from my purse the amount of my bill. This commission he soon executed; and I presented him with the thirty pounds.

“Why then long life to your beautiful face!” cried he, “for ’tis that is Heaven’s own finger-post! O th’n, O th’n, I am the man who is grateful; so now, to be sure, all I wish upon this earth, is some mischief or other to happen you!”

“ Thank you, Jerry,” said I. “ And pray is that the way you prove yourself grateful ?”

“ That same is the way, sure enough,” cried Jerry. “ For then, you know, I would relieve you, just as you did me ; and then why, I think I would feel aisy.”

I write from his house ; but must soon conclude my letter, as the time for the masquerade is approaching.

I confess I am not perfectly satisfied with the mode that I adopted to obtain the dress from the milliner ; since I took advantage of her indiscretion in one instance, to make her do wrong in another. However, the code of moral law that heroines acknowledge, is often opposite from those maxims which govern other conditions of life.

And, indeed, if we view the various ranks and departments, we shall perceive, that what constitutes criminality in some of them, appears unobjectionable in others. Thus: a servant is disgraced, who robs his master of wine ; but his master boasts how he defrauded the King of the revenue arising from that very wine. Thus too, what is called wantonness in a little minx with a flat face, is called only susceptibility in a heroine with an oval one. We weep at the letters of Heloise ; but were they written by an alderman's fat wife, we should laugh at them. The heroine may permit an amorous arm round her waist, disobey her parents, and make assignations in groves, yet be described as the most prudent of human creatures ; but the mere Miss

must abide by the hackneyed rules of modesty, decorum, and filial obedience. In a word, as different classes have distinct privileges, it appears to me, from what I have read of the Law National, and the Law Romantic, that the Heroine's prerogative resembles the King's; and that she, like him, can do no wrong.

Adieu.

## LETTER XVI.

O BIDDY, I have ascertained my genealogy! I am—but I must not anticipate. Take the particulars.

Having secured a comfortable bed at Jerry's, and eaten something, I repaired in a coach, to the Pantheon; and

D 2

that faithful Irishman escorted me thither.

But I must first describe my Tuscan dress. It was a short petticoat of pale green, and a boddice of white silk ; the sleeves were loose, and tied up at the shoulders, with ribbons and bunches of flowers. My hair, which fell in ringlets on my neck, was also ornamented with flowers, and with a rural hat of wheaten straw.

Fearfully and anxiously, I entered the assembly. Such a multitude of grotesque groups as presented themselves ! Clowns, harlequins, nuns, devils ; all talking and none listening. The clowns were happy to be called fools, the harlequins were as awkward as clowns, the nuns were impudent, and the devils were well-conducted.



Too much agitated to support my character with spirit, I hastened into a recess, and there awaited the arrival of the ancient vassal.

In a few minutes, a mask approached. It was an old man. His infirm figure leaned upon a staff, a palsy shook his venerable locks, and his garments had all the quaintness of antiquity.

For some minutes he stood gazing on me with earnestness ; and at length, heaving a heavy sigh, he thus broke into tremulous utterance.

“ A-well-a-day ! how the antique tears do run adown my wrinkled cheeks ; for well I wis, thou beest herself—the Lady Cherubina De Willoughby, the long-lost daughter of mine honoured mistress.”

“ And you,” cried I, starting from

my seat, "you are the ancient and loyal vassal!"

"Now by my truly, 'tis even so," said he.

I could have hugged the obsolete old man to my heart.

"Welcome, welcome, much respected menial!" cried I, grasping his hand. "But tell me at once all about it;—all about my family; and I will be the making of your fortune: dear good old man, depend upon it I will."

"Now by my fay," said he, "I will say forth my say. I am ycleped Whylome Eftsoones, and I was accounted comely when a younker. Good my lady, I must tell unto thee a right pleasant and quaint saying of a certain nun touching my face."

“ For pity’s sake,” cried I, “ pass it over for the present.”

“ Certes, my lady,” said he. “ Well, I was first taken, as a bonny page, into the service of thy great great grandfather’s fader’s brother; and I was in at the death of these four generations; till at last, I became seneschal unto thine honoured fader, Lord De Willoughby. His lordship married the Lady Hysterica Belamour, and thou wast the sole issue of that ill-fated union.

“ Soon after thy birth, thy noble father died of an apparition. Returning, impierced with mickle dolour, from his funeral, I was stopped on a common, by a tall figure, with a mirksome cloak, and a flapped hat. I shook grievously, ne in that ghastly dreriment wist how myself to bear.

“ Anon, he threw aside his disguise, and I beheld — Lord Gwyn! Lord Gwyn who was ywedded unto the sister of Lord De Willoughby, the Lady Eleanor.”

“ Then Lady Eleanor Gwyn is my own aunt !” cried I.

“ Thou sayest truly,” replied he, “ My good Eftsoones,” whispered Lord Gwyn to me, ‘ know you not that my wife, Lady Eleanor Gwyn, would enjoy all the extensive estates of her brother, Lord De Willoughby, if his child, the little Cherubina, were no more?’

“ I trow, ween, and wote, ’tis as your lordship saith,” answered I.

“ His lordship then put into mine hand a stiletto.

“ Eftsoones,” said he, ‘ if this dagger

be planted in the heart of a child, it will grow, and bear a golden flower !’

“ He spake, and incontinently took to striding away from me, in such wise, that maulgre and albe, I gan make effort after him, nathlesse and algates did child Gwyn forthwith flee from mine eyne.”

“ Bless me !” cried , quite provoked, “ I cannot understand half you say. What do you mean by *Child Gwyn*? Surely his Lordship was no suckling.”

“ In good old times,” answered Eftsoones, “ childe signified a noble youth ; and it is coming into fashion again. For instance, there is Childe Harold.”

“ Then,” said I, “ there is ‘second childishness ;’ and I fancy there will be

‘mere oblivion.’ But if possible, finish your tale in more modern language.”

“ I will endeavour,” said he. “ Tempted by this golden flower, I stole you from your mother, secreted you at the house of a peasant, and bribed him to rear you as his own daughter. I then told Lord Gwyn that I had dispatched you ; and the golden flower he gave me was three and fourpence !

“ When the dear lady, your mother, missed you, she became insane, executed the most elegant outrages on society ; and having plucked the last hair from her own head, ran into the woods, and has never been found since.”

“ Dear sainted sufferer !” exclaimed I.

“ Till a few days ago,” continued

Eftsoones, “ I heard no more of the peasant or of you ; when, to my surprise, the peasant sent for me. I went. He was dying. Such a scene ! He confessed that he had sold you to one farmer Wilkinson, about thirteen years before ; who purchased you on speculation.”

“ Yes,” cried I, “ on the speculation of a reward from Lord Gwyn for assassinating me. I have a parchment which ascertains the fact.”

“ What ! beginning with ‘ THIS INDENTURE,’ ” cried Eftsoones.

“ Yes,” said I, “ and then, ‘ for and in consideration of——’ ”

“ Doth grant, bargain, release——” cried he.

“ Possession, and to his heirs and assigns——” cried I.

“ Huzza, huzza, huzza ! ” cried he,

taking a stiff frisk ; “ your title is as clear as the sun ; and I hereby and thereby hail you Lady Cherubina de Willoughby, rightful heiress of all the territory that now appertaineth, or that may hereinafter appertain unto the House of De Willoughby.”

“ Wonderful ! most wonderful !” cried I. “ Oh, I am the happiest, happiest creature in the world !”

“ Now listen,” said he. “ Lady Gwyn, (for his lordship is long dead) resides at this moment, on your estate. I have a carriage in waiting : we will set off together this very night—”

“ This very moment !” cried I ; but as I spoke, a Domino came forward, took off its mask, and I beheld Stuart ! The moment he saluted me, Whylome Eftsoones slunk away.

Much as I was annoyed at his un-



seasonable interruption, I felt sincerely delighted to find, that he had not deserted me altogether.

After mutual salutations ; “ I came hither,” said he, “ upon the mere chance of meeting you ; since you intended being here, when I saw you last, and since I knew that the villain Betterton had planned the infernal plot of inveigling you hence. I called on you several times to-day, but was always answered that you were out. Suspecting that you were not, but that you meant to refuse my future visits ; and well aware of the dangers which environed you, I determined upon seeing you, at any hazard ; so having knocked once more, I rushed into the house, and raised a cry of fire.

“ This manoeuvre had the desired

effect, for an universal panic took place; and in the midst of it, I saw you issue forth, and effect your escape, while I was struggling with Grundy, who wanted to prevent my entrance. I pursued you, but soon lost all traces of your route. I therefore returned to your lodgings; where Higginson informed me, that Betterton had made the landlady fasten a carpet outside your window, for the purpose of darkening the chamber, and thus leading you to believe it night. Undoubtedly their object was to detain you in bed all day, that you might not see me before the masquerade.

“ I then called at Betterton’s house, but he was not within; and now, Miss Wilkinson, pardon me when I say, that I will never leave your side again,

till I restore you to your father, or entrust you to some careful friend."

Here a long argument arose ; and at length I pretended to yield the point ; but privately resolved upon giving him the slip, as soon as old Eftsoones should reappear.

I therefore walked about with him, several hours ; but no Eftsoones. And now the people had begun to disperse, and now the room was almost empty. Still no Eftsoones. At last, when scarcely one creature remained, and when all hope of seeing him was over, I acceded to the frequent solicitations of Stuart, and left the place.

On our way back, I told him that I would comply with his wish of accompanying me, provided he would suffer me to go where I chose. He asked me where I chose to

go? I answered, Lady Gwyn's; as I had a most mysterious and important transaction to settle in that quarter.

“Then,” said he, “I will escort you thither; for I am acquainted with her Ladyship, and rest assured, she shall receive you very graciously.”

We have now just returned to Jerry Sullivan's. I will sleep a couple of hours; Stuart will remain in the parlour; and to-morrow morning we will commence our expedition. I think I know enough of her husband's infamy to astonish and terrify her into some advantageous concession.

Well, Biddy, what say you now? A young, rich, titled heiress already—think of that, Biddy.

As soon as I can decently turn Lady

Gwyn out of doors, I mean to set up a most magnificent establishment. But I will treat the poor woman (who perhaps is innocent of her husband's crime) with extreme delicacy. She shall never want a bed or a plate. By the bye, I must purchase plate. My livery shall be white and crimson ; but I am sadly puzzled between bays and greys. Bid-dy, depend upon my patronage. With what importance the parson and music-master will boast of having known me ! Then our village will swarm so, *to hear tell as how* Miss Cherry has grown a great lady ; and no doubt, old mother Muggins, at the bottom of the hill, will live a week on the gossip. I think I must drive through some day or other. But I mean to nod quite familiarly, for there is nothing I hate like pride.

Yet, though the chief objection against my marriage will soon be removed, by the confirmation of my noble birth, I am not so ignorant of what heroines must suffer, as to imagine that no other impediments will interfere.

Ah, no, my friend ; be well assured, misfortune will not desert me quite so quickly. A present good is often but the precursor of an approaching evil ; and when prosperity points its sunshine in our faces, adversity, like our shadows, is ever at our heels.

Adieu.

## LETTER XVII.

EARLY this morning, I packed my clothes, jewels, parchment, and picture into a little box. Then Stuart and I, having breakfasted, and remunerated our entertainers, set off for Lady Gwyn's ; while Jerry ran at the side of the chaise, half way down the street, blessing me all over, and hoping that we might meet again in his house ; or if the worst came to the worst, in heaven.

We had now accomplished more than half our journey, and were waiting, at an inn, for a change of horses ; when the door opened, and in walked old Betterton ! He bowed, I started, Stuart reddened.

“ From my soul,” cried the hoary deluder, “ I rejoice at overtaking you before ’tis too late. Yes, my dear lady, I come to protect you against the treachery of pretended friends.”

“ Sir,” said Stuart, “ I do not understand—”

“ But, Sir,” cried Betterton, “ I do understand. I understand, Sir, that you are eloping with this lady. Nay, frown not, but listen.

“ Last night I happened to be at the Pantheon, and saw you there, escorting her. Even during our former interview, I had suspected your vile intentions ; but now finding you with her, at a masquerade, and without a matron, I felt fully convinced of them. I therefore traced you from the Pantheon ; and perceived, to



my horror, that you stopped at an infamous house in St. Giles's, where you remained during the night. This morning too, a chaise stood there, ready as if for a journey; whence concluding, as I well might, that an elopement was in agitation, I determined, if possible, to prevent so disastrous a catastrophe, by hiring a carriage and pursuing you.

“ Sir, you undertook to lecture me, when last I saw you; and plausibly you performed your part. I must now return the obligation. Mr. Stuart, Mr. Stuart, is it not a shame for you, Mr. Stuart? Is this the way you treat the daughter of your friend, Mr. Stuart? Go, silly boy, return home; say your prayers, and bless that chance which hath sent me to the protection of this lady's honour.”

“ Let me tell you, Sir,” returned Stuart, “ that neither grey hairs nor facetious admonition shall protect villainy from chastisement; and I must add, that if you, Sir, would take less trouble in protecting this lady’s honour, you would stand a better chance of preserving your own.”

“ Young gentleman,” answered Betterton, “ I will have you to know, that I would sacrifice my life in defence of my honour.”

“ If so,” said Stuart, “ though your life has but little of the saint, it would, at least, have something of the martyr.”

Betterton scowled at him askance, and grinned prospective vengeance.

“ Gentlemen,” said I, “ each has accused the other of evil designs. Let not arguments, but actions, determine the point. Mr. Stuart, I have already

asked you to escort me, conceiving that you will prove a protector. Mr. Betterton, I now give you the same invitation for the same motive. I am going down to Lady Gwyn's; and if you have leisure, would feel happy at your company."

"Then, assuredly, I will do myself the honour to join your party," said he, with a triumphant glance at Stuart, who stood as if he were shot.

The fact is, I felt grateful to the valuable old villain, for his unwearied industry in promoting the memoirs of my life.

We then got into one of the chaises, and proceeded several miles, without any particular occurrence.

At length it was evening. A few fleecy clouds floated through the blue

depths of ether. The breezes brought coolness on their wings, and an inviting valley, watered by a rivulet, lay to the left; here whitened with sheep, and there dotted with little encampments of hay.

Tempted by the prospect, after my long confinement in the metropolis, I proposed to my companions, our walking the remainder of the journey through the fields. Each, whatever was his motive, caught at the proposal with delight, and we then directed the chaise to wait for us in the village which adjoins Gwyn Castle.

I now hastened to luxuriate in Arcadian beatitude. My pastoral garb of Tuscany was appropriate: nothing remained but to rival an *Ida*, or a *Glorvina*, in simple touches of nature; and

to trip along the lawns, like a Daphne or a Hamadryad.

On a sudden, I sprang across a hedge, and fled towards the valley, light as a wood-nymph flying from a satyr. I then took up a most picturesque position. It was beside the streamlet, under a weeping willow, and on a grassy bank. A little farther, stood a romantic cottage, with a small garden behind it, encompassed by green paling. The stream prattled prettily; save where a projecting stone shattered its crystal, and made its music hoarse. Here and there, too, it purled and murmured; but no where could it be said to tinkle or gurgle, to chide or brawl.

Flinging off my hat, I shook my locks over my shoulders, and began

braiding them in the manner of a simple shepherdess.

Stuart reached me the first; and at that moment a lambkin began its pretty bleat.

“Now,” said I, “make me a simple tripping little ditty on a lambkin.”

“You shall have it,” answered he, “and such as an attorney’s clerk would read to a milliner’s apprentice.”

Dear sensibility, O la!  
I heard a little lamb cry, ba;  
Says I, so you have lost mamma?  
Ah!

The little lamb, as I said so,  
Frisking about the field did go,  
And frisking, trod upon my toe.  
Oh!

“Neat enough,” said I, “only that it wants the word LOVE.”

“ True,” cried Stuart; “ for our modern poems abound in the word, though they seldom have much of the feeling.”

“ And pray, my good friend,” asked I archly, as I bound up my golden ringlets—“ WHAT IS LOVE?”

“ Nay,” said he, “ they say that talking of love is making it.”

Plucking a thistle which sprang from the bank, I blew away its down with my balmy breath, merely to hide my confusion.

Surely I am the most sensitive of all created beings!

Betterton had now reached us, out of breath after his race, and utterly unable to articulate.

“ Betterton,” cried I, “ what is love?”

“ ’Tis,” said he, gasping, “ ’tis—  
,tis ——”

“ The gentleman,” cried Stuart, “ gives as good a description of it as most of our modern poets ; who make its chief ingredients panting and broken murmurs.”

“ Love,” said I, “ is a mystical sympathy, which unfolds itself in the glance that seeks the soul,—the sentiment that the soul embodies—the tender gaiety—the more delicious sadness—the stifled sigh—the soft and malicious smile—the thrill, the hope, the fear—each in itself a little bliss. Such is love.”

“ And if such be love,” said Stuart, “ I fear I shall never bring myself to make it.”

“ And pray,” said I, “ how would you make love?”



“ There are many modes,” answered he, “ and the way to succeed with one girl is often the way to fail with another. Girls may be divided into the conversable and inconvertible. He who can talk the best, has therefore the best chance of the former; but would a man make a conquest of one of the beautiful Inutilities, who sits in sweet stupidity, plays off the small simpers, and founds her prospects on the shape of her face, he has little more to do than call her a goddess, and make himself a monkey. Or if that should fail, as he cannot apply to her understanding, he must have recourse to her feeling, and try what the touch can do for him. The touch has a thousand virtues. Only let him establish a lodgment on the first joint

of her little finger, he may soon set out upon his travels, and make the grand tour of her waist. This is, indeed, having wit at his fingers' ends; and this will soon gain the hearts of those demure misses, who think that silence is modesty, that to be insipid is to be innocent, and that because they have not a word for a young man in public, they may have a kiss for him in private."

"Come," said I, "since love is the subject, I want some amorous verses to swell my memoirs; so, Betterton, I call on you."

Betterton bowed and began :

Say, Fanny, why has bounteous heaven,  
In every end benign and wise,  
Perfection to your features given ?  
Enchantment to your witching eyes ?

Was it that mortal man might view  
These charms at distance, and adore ?  
Ah, no! the man who would not woo,  
Were less than mortal, or were more.

The mossy rose, by humming bee,  
And painted butterfly carest,  
We leave not lingering on the tree,  
But snatch it to the happy breast.

There, unsurpassed in sweets, it dwells ;—  
Unless the breast be Fanny's own :  
There blooming, every bloom excels ;—  
Except of Fanny's blush alone.

O Fanny, life is on the wing,  
And years, like rivers, glide away :  
To-morrow may misfortune bring,  
Then, gentle girl, enjoy to-day.

And while the whimpering kiss I sip,  
Ah, start not from these ardent arms ;  
As if afraid, my pressing lip  
Might desolate your own of charms.

For see, we crush not, tho' we tread,  
The cup and primrose. Fanny smiled.  
Come then and press the cup, she said,  
Come then and press the primrose wild.

“ Now,” cried Stuart, “ I can give  
you a poem, with just as much love in  
it, and twice as much kissing.”

“ That,” said I, “ would be a treasure indeed.”

He then began :

Dawn with streaks of purple light,  
Paints her grey and fragrant fingers,  
While no more, Creolian night,  
In the unstarred azure, lingers.

Upward poplars, downward willows,  
Rustle round us ; zephyrs sprinkle  
Scents of daffodillies, lilies,  
Mignonette, and periwinkle.

Rosy, balmy, honied, humid,  
    Biting, burning, murmuring kisses,  
Sally, I will snatch from you, mid  
    Looks demure that tempt to blisses.

If your cheek grow cold, my dear,  
    I will kiss it, till it flushes ;  
Or if warm, my raptured tear,  
    Shall extinguish all its blushes.

Yes, that dimple is a valley,  
    Where sports many a little true love ;  
And that glance you dart, my Sally,  
    Might melt diamonds into dew, love.

But while idle thus I chat,  
    I the war of lips am missing.  
This, this, this, and that, that, that,  
    These make kissing, kissing, kissing.

The style reminded me of Mont-  
morenci ; and at the same moment I  
heard a rustling sound behind me. I

started. " 'Tis Montmorenci!" cried I. Agitated in the extreme, I turned to see—It was only a cock-sparrow.

I deserve the disappointment," said I, " for I have never once thought of that amiable youth, since I last beheld him. Sweetest and noblest of men," I exclaimed, in an audible soliloquy, such as heroines often practise; " say, dost thou mourn my mysterious absence? Perhaps the draught of air that I now inhale, is the same which thou hast breathed, in a sigh for the far distant Cherubina!"

" That cannot well be;" interrupted Stuart, " because, unless the sigh of this unknown was packed in a case, and hermetically sealed, it could hardly have come so far, without being dispersed on the way."

“There, you are mistaken,” answered I. “For in the Hermit of the Rock, the heroine, while sitting on the Sardinian coast, thought it highly probable, that the billow then at her feet, might be the identical billow, which had drowned her lover, about a year before, off the coast of Martinique.”

“That was not more improbable than the theory which Valancourt invented,” said Stuart.

“What theory?” asked I.

“Why,” said he, “that the sun sets, in different longitudes, at the same moment. For when his Emily was going to Italy, while he remained in France, he bade her watch the setting sun every evening, that both he and she might gaze upon it at once. Now, since the sun would set, where

she was in Italy, much earlier than where he was in France, they could not, according to common astronomy, pursue the gazing system, with any chance of success."

"But, Sir," said Betterton, "heroes and heroines are not bound to understand astronomy."

"And yet," answered Stuart, "they are greater star-gazers than the ancient Egyptians. To form an attachment for the moon, and write a sonnet on it, is the first symptom of a heroine."

As he spoke, a butterfly came fluttering about me. To chase butterflies is a classical amusement, introduced by Caroline of Lichfield; so springing on my feet, I began the pastime. The nimble insect eluded my fingers, and got over the paling, into the garden.



I followed it through the gate, and caught it ; but alas ! bruised its body, and broke one of its wings. The poor thing took refuge in a lily ; where it lay struggling awhile, and then its little spirit fled to the stars.

What an opportunity for a sonnet ! I determined to compose one. A beautiful bush of roses was blushing near the lily, and reminded me how pastoral I should look, could I recline on roses, during my poetical ecstasy. But might I venture to pick some ? Surely a few could do no harm. I glanced round--- Nobody was in sight--I picked a few. But what mattered a few for what I wanted ? I picked a few more. The more I picked, the more I longed to pick---'Tis human nature ; and was not Eve herself tempted in a garden ?

So from roses I went to lilies, from lilies to carnations, thence to jessamine, honeysuckle, eglantine; till I had filled my hat, and almost emptied the beds. I then hurried out of the garden; sentenced Stuart and Betterton to fifty yards' banishment, and just under the willow constructed a couch of flowers, which I inlaid with daisies, and moss.

I then flung myself upon my paradisaical carpet; and my recumbent form, as it pressed the perfumes, was indeed, that of the Mahometan Houri. Exercise and agitation had heightened the glow of my cheeks, and the wind had blown my yellow hair about my face, like withered leaves round a ripened peach. I never looked so lovely.

In a short time I was able to repeat this sonnet aloud.

Where the blue stream reflected flowerets pale,  
A fluttering butterfly, with many a freak,  
Dipped into dancing bells, and spread its sail,  
White as the snow, and edged with jetty streak.  
I snatched it passing; but a pinion frail,  
Besprent with mealy gold, I chanced to break.  
The mangled insect, ill deserving bane,  
Falls in the hollow of a lily new.  
My tears drop after it, but drop in vain.  
The cup, tho' fresh with azure air and dew,  
And flowery dust and grains of fragrant seed,  
Can ne'er revive it from the fatal deed.  
So guileless nymphs attract some traiterous eye,  
So by the spoiler crushed, reject all joy and die.

The pomp of composition over, I began to think that I had treated the owner of the garden ill. I felt guilty of little less than theft; and was deliberating on what I ought to do, when an old peasant came running towards me from the garden.

“ Miss !” cried he, “ have you seen any body pass this way with a parcel of flowers ; for some thief has just robbed me of all I had ?”

I raised myself a little to reply, and he perceived the flowers underneath.

“ Odd’s life !” cried he, “ so you are the thief, are you ? How dare you, hussey, commit such a robbery ?”

“ I am no hussey, and ’tis no robbery,” cried I. “ Hussey, indeed ! Sir, it was all your own fault in leaving that uncouth gate of your’s sprawling open. Pretty master of a house you are ! Hussey, indeed !”

The peasant was just about to seize me, when Stuart ran forward, and prevented him. They had then some private conversation, and I saw Stuart give him a guinea. The talismanic

touch of gold struck instant peace. Indeed, I have found, that even my face, with all its dimples, blushes, and glances, could never do half so much for me, as the royal face on a bit of gold.

The peasant was now very civil, and invited us to rest in his cottage. Thither we repaired, and found his daughter, a beautiful young woman, just preparing the dinner. I felt instantly interested in her fate. I likewise felt fatigued and hungry; and as evening was now near a close, my visit to Gwyn Castle might appear rather unseasonable. Under these circumstances, therefore, I called the girl aside, begged of her to give me a dinner, and, if possible, a bed, at the cottage; and assured her that I would recompense her liberally.

She said she would accommodate me, if her father would permit her; and she then went to consult him. After a private conference between them, she told me that he would let me remain. So we soon agreed upon the terms; and a village was at hand, where Stuart and Betterton might dine and sleep.

Before these departed, they made me promise not to quit the cottage, till both of them should return, next morning; but I took an opportunity of whispering in Stuart's ear.

“At ten o'clock to-night, trill a canzonet beneath my casement. I will then open it, and admit you to a stolen interview.”

In short, Biddy, I perceive, that the man, with a little encouragement, will

soon become the unsuccessful lover, the Sir Charles Bingley of my Memoirs.

Dinner is announced.

Adieu.

### LETTER XVIII.

AT dinner, a young farmer joined us; and soon perceived that he and the peasant's daughter, Mary, were born for each other. They betrayed their mutual tenderness by a thousand little endearments, which passed, as they thought, unobserved.

After dinner, when Mary was about accompanying me to walk, the youth stole after us, drew her back, and I heard him kiss her. She returned with her ringlets a little ruf-

fled, and her ripe lips ruddier than before.

“ Well, Mary,” said I, “ what was he doing to you ?”

“ Doing, Ma’am ? Nothing, I am sure, Ma’am.”

“ Nothing, Mary ?”

“ Why, Ma’am, he only wanted to be a little rude, and kiss me, I believe.”

“ And you would not allow him, Mary ?”

“ Why should I tell a falsehood about the matter, Ma’am ? To be sure I did not hinder him ; for he is my sweetheart, and we shall be married next week.”

“ And do you love him, Mary ?”

“ Better than my life, Ma’am. There never was such a lad ; he has not a



fault in the wide world, and all the girls are dying of envy that I have got him."

"Well, Mary," said I, "we will take a rural repast down to the brook, and tell our loves. The contrast will be beautiful; mine, the refined, sentimental, pathetic story; your's the pretty, simple, artless tale. Come, my friend; let us return, and prepare the rustic banquet. No metropolitan Souchong; no brown George and Stirabout. Oh! no, but creams, berries, and fruits; goat's milk, figs, and honey — Arcadian, pastoral, primeval dainties!"

However, on returning to the cottage, we could get nothing better than some currants, gooseberries, and a maple bowl of cream. Mary, indeed,

poor thing, cut a large slice of bread and butter for her private amusement ; and with these we repaired to the streamlet. I then threw myself on my flowery sofa, and my companion sat beside me.

We helped ourselves. I took rivulet to my cream, and scooped the brook with my rosy palm. Innocent nymph !

“ How soft, how serene this evening ! ” exclaimed I. “ It is a landscape for a Claud. But how much more charming is an Italian or a French, than an English landscape. O ! to saunter over hillocks, covered with lavender, thyme, juniper and tamarisc, while shrubs fringe the points of the rocks, or patches of meagre vegetation tint their recesses ! Almonds, cy-

presses, palms, olives, and dates stretch along ; nor are the larch and ilex, the masses of granite, and forests of fir wanting ; while the Garonne wanders from the Pyrenees, and winds its blue waves towards the Bay of Biscay.

“ Then, Mary, though your own cottage is tolerable, yet is it, as in Italy, covered with vine-leaves, fig-trees, jessamine, and clusters of grapes ? Is it tufted with myrtle, or shaded with a grove of lemon, orange, and bergamot ? ”

“ But, Ma’am,” said Mary, “ ’tis shaded with some fine old elms.”

“ True,” cried I, “ but are the flowers of the agnus castus there ? Is the pomegranate of Shemlek there ? Are the Asiatic andrachne, the rose co-

loured nerit, and the verdant alia marina there? Are they, Mary?"

"I believe not, Ma'am," answered she. "But then our fields are all over daisies, butterflowers, clover-blossoms, and daffodowndillies."

"Daffodowndillies!" cried I. "Ah, Mary, Mary, you may be a very good girl, but you do not shine in description. Now I leave it to your own taste, which sounds better, — Asiatic an-drachne, or daffodowndillies? Oh, my friend, never while you live, say daffodowndillies."

"Never, if I can help it, Ma'am," said Mary. "And I hope you do not think the worse of me, for having said it now; since I could safely make oath that I never heard, till this instant, of its being a naughty word."

“ I am satisfied,” said I. “ So now let us tell our loves ; and you shall begin.”

“ Indeed, Ma’am,” said she, “ I have nothing to tell.”

“ Impossible,” cried I. “ What ! no quarrelling, no rivalling, no slander-ing, no any thing ?”

“ No, Ma’am. He took a small farm near us ; and he liked me from the first, and I liked him, and both families wished for the match, Ma’am ; and when he asked me to marry him, I said I would, Ma’am, and so we shall be married next week ; and that is the whole story, Ma’am.”

“ A melancholy story, indeed !” said I. “ What pity that an interesting pair, like you, who, without flattery, seem born for one of Marmontel’s tales, should be so cruelly sacrificed.”

I then began to consider whether any thing could yet be done in their behalf, or whether the matter was past redemption. I reflected that it were but an act of charity,—hardly deserving praise—to snatch them awhile from mere matrimony, and introduce them to a few sensibilities. Surely, with very little ingenuity, I might get up an incident or two between them;—a week's or a fortnight's torture, perhaps;—and afterwards enjoy the luxury of re-uniting them.

With this laudable intention, I sat meditating awhile; and at length hit upon an admirable plan. It was no less than to make Mary (without her own knowledge) write a letter, dismissing her William for ever! This appears impossible; but attend.

“ My story,” said I, to the unsuspecting girl, “ is long and lamentable, and I fear, I have not spirits for relating it. I shall merely tell you, that I have eloped with the younger of the gentlemen who were here this morning, and have married him. I took this step, because my parents insisted that I should marry another, whom I disliked, and who, by the bye, is a namesake of your William’s. Now, Mary, I have a favour to beg. This man must be informed of my marriage; and as I promised my husband that I would never hold a correspondence with him, will you just take the trouble of writing, in my name, what I shall desire you ?”

“ That I will, and welcome,” said the simple girl; “ only, Ma’am, I fear

I shall disgrace a lady like you, with my bad writing. I am, out and out, the worst scribbler in our family; and William says to me, ah, Mary, says he, if your tongue talked as your pen writes, you might die an old maid for me. Ah, William, says I, I would bite off my tongue sooner than die an old maid. So, to be sure, Willy laughed very hearty."

We then returned home, and retired into my chamber, where I dictated, and Mary wrote as follows:

" Dear William,

" Prepare your mind for receiving a great and unexpected shock. To keep you no longer in suspense, I am  
MARRIED.

" Before I had become acquainted



with you, I loved another man, whose name, however, I must conceal. About a year ago, circumstances obliged his going abroad, but before his departure, he procured my promise to marry him on his return. You then came, and rivalled him.

“ As he never once wrote during his absence, I concluded that he was dead. Yesterday, however, a letter from him announced his return, and appointed a private interview. I went. He had a clergyman in waiting to join our hands. I prayed, entreated, wept—all in vain.

“ I BECAME HIS WIFE.

“ O, William, pity, but do not blame me. If you are a man of honour and of feeling, never shew this letter, or tell its contents, as my father must

not know of my marriage for many months. Do not even speak to myself on the subject.

“ Adieu, dear William: adieu for ever.”

We then returned to the parlour, and found William there. While we were conversing, I took an opportunity of slipping the letter, unperceived, into his hand, and of bidding him read it elsewhere. He retired with it, and we continued talking. But in a few minutes he hurried back into the room, with an agitated countenance; stopped opposite Mary, and fixed his eyes earnestly upon her.

“ William!” cried she, “ William! For shame then, don’t frighten one so.”

“ No, Mary,” said he, “ I scorn

to frighten you, or injure you either. But no wonder my last look at you should be frightful. There, take your true-lover's knot—there, take your hair—there, take your letters. So now, Mary, good-by, good-by; and that you may live and die happy, is what I pray Providence, from the bottom of my broken heart!”

With these words, and a piteous glance of anguish, he rushed from the room.

Mary remained motionless a moment; then half rose, sat down, rose again; and grew pale and red by turns.

“‘Tis so—so laughable,” said she at length, while her quivering lip refused the attempted smile. “All my presents returned too. Sure—my heavens!—Sure he cannot want to break

off with me? Well, I have as good a spirit as he, I believe. The base man; the cruel, cruel man!" and she burst into a passion of tears.

I tried to sooth her, but the more I said, the more she wept. She was certain, she said, she was quite certain, that he wanted to leave her; and then she sobbed so plaintively, that I was on the very point of undeceiving her; when, fortunately, she heard her father returning, and ran into her own room. He asked about her; I told him that she was not well;—the old excuse of a fretting heroine;—so he hastened to her, and with difficulty gained admittance. They have remained together ever since.

How delicious will be the happy denouement of this pathetic episode,

this dear novellette; and how sweetly will it read in my memoirs!

Adieu.

## LETTER XIX.

THE night was dark when I repaired to the casement, and I had intended beginning this letter with a description of it, in the style of the best romances. But after summoning to my mind all the black articles of value that I can recollect—ebony, sables, palls, pitch, and even coal, I find I have nothing better to say, than, simply,—The night was dark.

Having seated myself at the casement, I composed this

## SONNET.

Now while within their wings each feather'd  
pair,

Hide the hush'd head, thy visit, moon,  
renew,

Shake thy pale tresses down, irradiate air,  
And tip the spicy flowers that scent the  
dew.

The lonely nightingale shall pipe to thee,  
And I will moralize her minstrelsy.

The gorgeous Sun ten thousand warblers sing,  
One only bird proclaims the placid moon ;  
Thus for the great, how many wake the string,  
Thus for the good, how few the lyre attune.

Just as I had finished it, a low and  
tremulous voice, close to the case-  
ment, sang these words :

Haste, my love, and come away ;

What is folly, what is sorrow ?

'Tis to turn from joys to-day,

'Tis to wait for cares to-morrow.

By yon river,  
Aspens shiver :  
Thus I tremble at delay.  
Light discovers,  
Whispering lovers :  
See the stars with sharpened ray,  
Gathering thicker,  
Glancing quicker ;  
Haste, my love, and come away.

I sat enraptured, and heaved a sigh.

“ Enchanting sigh ! ” exclaimed the singer, as he sprang through the window ; but I screamed aloud, for it was not the voice of Stuart.

“ Hush ! ” cried the mysterious unknown, and advanced towards me : I retreated, still shrieking ; and now the door was thrown open, and the man of the house entered, with Mary behind him, holding a candle.

In the middle of the room, stood a

man, clad in a black cloak, with black feathers in his hat, and a black mask upon his face.

The peasant ran forward, and knocked him to the ground.

“Unmask him!” cried I.

The peasant, kneeling on his body, tore off the mask, and I beheld—Betberton!

“Alarm the neighbours, Mary!” cried the peasant.

“I must appear in an unfavourable light to you, my good man,” said this terrifying character; “but the young lady will inform you that I came hither at her request.”

“For shame!” cried I. “What a falsehood!”

“Falsehood!” said he. “I have your own letter, desiring me to come.”



“The man is mad,” cried I. “I never wrote such a letter in my life !”

“I can produce it, however,” said he, pulling a paper from his pocket, and to my great amazement reading these lines.

“Cherubina begs that Betterton will repair to her window, at ten o’clock to-night, disguised like an Italian. The signal is his singing an air under the casement, which she will open, and he may then enter her chamber.”

“Santa Maria !” cried I, “why, I never wrote a line of it ! But this wretch (a ruffian of the first pretensions, I assure you), has a base design upon my person, and has followed me from London, for the purpose of effect-

ing it; so I suppose, he wrote the letter himself, to himself, as an excuse, in case of discovery."

"Then he shall march to the magistrate," said the peasant, "and I will indict him for house-breaking."

A man half so frantic as Betterton I never beheld. He foamed, he grinned, he grinded the remnants of his teeth; and he swore that Stuart was at the bottom of the whole plot.

By this time, Mary having returned with some neighbours, we set forward in a body to the magistrate, and delivered our depositions before him.

The magistrate, therefore, notwithstanding all that Betterton could say, committed him to prison without hesitation.

As they were leading him away, he

cast a furious look at the magistrate, and said:—

“Ay, Sir, I suppose you are one of those pensioned justices, who minister our vague and sanguinary laws, and do dark deeds for an usurping oligarchy, that now makes our most innocent actions misdemeanours, determines points of law without appeal, imprisons our persons without trial, and breaks open our houses with the standing army. But till we have a reform in Parliament, neither peace nor war, commerce nor agriculture, nothing will go right.”

“Not even clocks nor watches?” said the magistrate.

“Not even clocks nor watches,” cried Betterton, in a rage. “For how can our mechanics make any thing good, while a packed parliament deprives them of capital, and a mart?”

“ So then,” said the magistrate, “ since a reform in parliament would improve our time-pieces, you reformers will probably be the means of discovering the longitude.”

“ No sneering, Sir,” cried Betterton. “ But do your duty, as you call it, and abide the consequence.”

This gallant grey Lothario was then led to prison ; and our party returned home.

Adieu.

## LETTER XX.

I ROSE early this morning, and sought my favourite willow. Flinging myself on the margin of the bank, I began to warble a rustic madrigal, while I let down my length of tresses, and laved

them in the little urn of the dimpling Naiad.

This, you know, was romantic enough, but the accident that befel me was not ; for, leaning too much over, I lost my balance, and rolled headlong into the rivulet. As it was shallow, I did not fear being drowned, but as I was a heroine, I hoped to be rescued. Therefore, instead of rising, there I lay, shrieking and listening, and now and then lifting my head, in hopes to see Stuart come flying on the wings of the wind. Oh no ! my gentleman thought proper to make himself scarce ; so dripping, shivering, and indignant, I scramble out of the stream, and bent my steps towards the cottage.

On turning the corner of the hedge,

who should I perceive, but the hopeful youth himself, quite at his ease, and blowing a penny trumpet for a chubby boy.

“What has happened to you?” said he, seeing me wring a rivulet from my dress.

“Only that I fell into the brook,” answered I, “and was under the disagreeable necessity of saving my own life, when I expected you would kindly have condescended to take the trouble off my hands.”

“Expected!” cried he. “Surely you had no reason for supposing that I was so near as to render you assistance.”

“And therefore,” retorted I, “I had every reason for supposing that you would render me assistance.”

“ You deal in riddles,” said he.

“ Not at all,” answered I. “ Surely the farther off a distressed heroine in danger believes a hero, the nearer he is sure to be. Only let her have good grounds for imagining him at her Antipodes, and nine times out of ten she finds him at her elbow. But I beg pardon ; you are no hero.”

“ Well,” said he, laughing, “ though I did not save your life then, I will not endanger it now, by detaining you in your wet garments. Pray go and change them.”

I took his advice, and borrowed some clothes from Mary, while mine were put to the fire. After breakfast, I once more equipped myself in my Tuscan costume, and a carriage being ready, I took an affectionate leave of that interesting rustic. Poor girl ! Her at-

tempts at cheerfulness all the morning were truly tragical; and, absorbed in another sorrow, she felt but little for my departure.

On our way, Stuart confessed that he was the person who forged the letter to Betterton; and that he did so for the purpose of accomplishing his temporary arrest, and thus of separating me from so dangerous a companion. He was himself at the window during the whole adventure, as he meant to have intercepted Betterton, had the peasant failed in securing him.

“ You will excuse this interference in your concerns,” added he; “ but gratitude commands me to protect the daughter of my guardian; and friendship for her converts the duty into a pleasure.”



“ Ah!” said I, “ however it happens, I fear you now dislike me.”

“ Believe me, my lovely visionary, you mistake,” answered he. “ With a few foibles (which are themselves as fascinating as foibles can be), you possess many virtues; and, let me add, attractions. As I sometimes annoy you with animadversion, I must now conciliate you with flattery.”

“ Flattery,” said I, pleased by his praises, and willing to please him in return by serious conversation; “ flattery deserves censure, only when the motive is mean or vicious.”

“ True,” returned he; “ and even though a compliment may not be sincere, our motive for paying it may be good. Flattery, so far from injuring, may benefit; since it is possible to

create a virtue in others, by persuading them that they possess it."

"Besides," said I, "may we not imply compliments, without intending to impose them as serious truths; but merely meaning to make ourselves agreeable by an effort of the wit? And since such an effort evinces that we consider the person worthy of it, the compliment proves a kind intention at least, and thus tends to cement affection and friendship."

In this manner we touched on a thousand topics, and continued a delightful conversation during the remainder of the journey. Sometimes he seemed greatly gratified at my sprightly sallies, or sober remarks; but never could I throw him off his guard, by the dangerous softness of my manner.

Would you believe that this Mentor is a poet, and a poet of feeling. But whether he wrote these lines on a real or an imaginary being, I cannot, by any art, extract from him.

## THE FAREWELL.

Go, gentle muse, 'tis near the gloomy day,  
Long dreaded ; go, and bid farewell for me :  
Farewell to her who once endured thy lay,  
Since soon she hastens hence. Ah, hard decree !

Tell her I feel that at the parting hour,  
Not waves alone will heave in tumult wild ;  
Not skies alone will rain a gushing shower,  
Not winds alone will breathe a murmur mild.

Say that her influence flies not with her form,  
That distant she will still engage my mind :  
That suns are most remote when they most warm.  
That flying Parthians scatter darts behind.

Long will I gaze upon her vacant home,  
As the bird lingers near its pilfered nest ;  
There, will I cry, she turned the studious tome ;  
There sported, there her envied pet caressed.

There, while she sat at each accomplished art,  
I saw her form, inclined with Sapphic grace ;  
Her radiant eyes, blest emblems of her heart,  
And all the living treasures of her face.

The Parian forehead parting clustered hair,  
The cheek of peachy tinct, the meaning brow ;  
The witching archness, and the simple air,  
So magical, it charmed I knew not how.

Light was her footstep as the silent flakes  
Of falling snow ; her smile was blithe as morn ;  
Her dimple, like the print the berry makes,  
In some smooth lake, when dropping from the  
thorn.

To snatch her passing accents as she spoke,  
To see her slender hand, (that future prize)  
Fling back a ringlet, oft I dared provoke,  
The gentle vengeance of averted eyes.

Yet ah, what wonder, if when shrinking awe  
Withheld me from her sight, I broke my chain?  
Or when I made a single glance my law,  
What wonder if that law were made in vain?

And say, can nought but converse love inspire?  
What tho' her lips for me have never moved?  
The vale that speaks but with its feathered choir,  
When long beheld, eternally is loved.

Go then, my muse, 'tis near the gloomy day  
Of parting; go, and bid farewell for me;  
Farewell to her who once endured thy lay,  
Whate'er engage her, whereso'er she be.

If slumbering, tell her in my dreams she sways,  
If speaking, tell her in my words she glows;  
If thoughtful, tell her in my thoughts she strays,  
If tuneful, tell her in my song she flows.

Tell her that soon my dreams will wander wild;  
That soon my words will intermingle moans;  
That soon my thoughts will languish unbeguiled;  
That soon my song will trill lamenting tones.

Yet dream, word, thought, and song shall often  
frame,

Dear scenes ideal, where we meet at last ;  
Where, by my peril, snatched from wreck or  
flame,

She smiles reward and talks of all the past:

Now to the rural lark she hastes away.

Ah, could the bard some winged warbler be,  
Following her form, no longer would he say,  
Go, gentle muse, and bid farewell for me.

I write from the village, where the  
chaise, with my box, had awaited our  
arrival. Another hour and my fate is  
decided.

Adieu.

## LETTER XXI.

At length with a throbbing heart,  
I now, for the first time, beheld Gwyn  
Castle, the mansion of my revered

ancestors, and the present abode of Lady Gwyn. That unfortunate usurper of my rights was at home ; so leaving Stuart (whom I would not suffer to accompany me) in the chaise, I alighted, and was ushered into the sitting-room.

I entered with gentleness, yet majesty ; while my Tuscan habit, which was soiled and shrivelled by the brook, gave me an air of complicated distress.

I found her Ladyship at a table, classifying fossils.

On seeing me, she looked surprised ; but smiled, and inquired my business.

“ It is a business,” said I, “ of the most vital importance to your honour and repose ; and I lament that imperious necessity compels me to undertake

the invidious task of acquainting your Ladyship with it. Could any thing heighten the painful nature of my feelings, it would be my finding that I had wounded your's."

"Your preamble alarms me," said she. "Do pray be explicit."

"I begin," said I, "with declaring my conviction of your ignorance, that any person alive, except yourself, has a right to the property which your Ladyship at present possesses."

"Assuredly the notion never entered my head," said she; "and indeed, were such a claim made, I should consider it utterly untenable."

"I regret," said I, "that it is quite undeniable. There are documents extant, and witnesses living, to prove it beyond all refutation."



Her Ladyship, I thought, changed colour, as she said :

“ This is strange ; but I cannot believe it. Who could possibly have the face to set up such a silly claim ? ”

“ I am so unfortunate as to have that face,” answered I in a tone of the most touching humility.

“ You ! ” she exclaimed with amazement. “ You ! ”

“ Pardon the pain I give you,” said I, “ but such is the fact ; and much as this interview must outrage our mutual feelings, I do assure your Ladyship, that I have sought it, solely to prevent the more grating process of a lawsuit.”

“ You are welcome to twenty lawsuits, if you wish them,” cried she ;

“but I fancy they will not deprive me of my property.”

“At least,” said I, “they may be the means of subjecting your deceased husband to the most horrid imputations.”

“I defy the whole universe to sully his character,” cried she.

“Ah,” said I, “little your Ladyship knows what that unfortunate nobleman once attempted — indeed, I trust, more from momentary impulse, than from inherent depravity; for often, in a moment of temptation, man perpetrates atrocities, which his better heart afterwards disowns; and—”

“But he attempted, you say;” cried she. “What did he attempt?”

“Ah!” said I, “your Ladyship will not compel me to mention.”

“ I will !” cried she. “ I demand an unequivocal explanation. What did he attempt ?”

“ Well, since I must speak plain,” replied I, “ he attempted—no I will not tell.”

“ You shall !” cried she with increasing agitation. “ By heaven, you shall tell this instant !”

“ Why then,” said I, he attempted—assassination !”

“ Merciful powers !” said she, sinking back, and reddening violently. “ What does the horrid woman mean ?”

“ At this moment,” cried I, “ a person is ready to make oath, that your unhappy husband bribed a servant to murder me, while an infant, in cold blood.”

“ ’Tis a falsehood !” shrieked she.

“ I would stake my life upon its being a vile, malicious, diabolical falsehood.”

“ Would it were !” said I, “ but oh ! Lady Gwyn, the circumstances, the circumstances — these cannot be contradicted. The morning was dreary ; — the bones of my noble father had just been deposited in the grave ; — when a tall muffled figure, armed with a dagger, stood before the seneschal. *It was the late Lord Gwyn !*”

“ Who are you ?” cried she, starting up quite pale and horror-struck. “ In the name of all that is dreadful, who can you be ?”

“ Your own niece !” said I, meekly kneeling to receive her blessing --- The Lady Cherubina De Willoughby, daughter to your Ladyship’s deceased brother, Lord De Willoughby, and to

his much injured wife, the Lady Hysterica Belamour !”

“ Never heard of such persons in all my days !” cried she, ringing the bell furiously.

“ Pray now,” said I, “ be calm. Though you lose your property, do not forget your birth. Dignify degradation by humility. On my honour, I mean to treat you with kindness, nay with friendship. I shall make it a point. After all, what is rank ? what are riches ? How heartless their charms compared with those of honour and of virtue ! O, Lady Gwyn, O, my respected aunt ; I conjure you by our common ties of blood, by your brother, who was my father, spurn the perilous toy, fortune, and retire in time, and without exposing your lost lord,

into the peaceful bosom of obscurity!"

"Conduct this wretch out of the house," said her Ladyship as the servant entered. "She wants to extort money I believe."

"A moment more," cried I. "Where is old Eftsoones? Where is that worthy character?"

"I know no such person," said she. "Begone, impostor!"

"Impostor!" cried I. "That is a good one. But I have a certain parchment, I fancy—"

"And a great deal of insolence, I fancy," said she.

"Something like it, at least," cried I, "for I have your Ladyship's portrait."

"My portrait!" said she with a sneer.

“As sure as your name is Nell Gwyn,” cried I; “for Nell Gwyn is written under it.”

“You little impertinent reprobate!” exclaimed she. “Begone this moment, or I will have you drummed through the village.”

“Never mind,” said I: “if I am not even with you yet, I wonder at it.” And I walked out of my own house.

“Well,” said Stuart, as I got to the carriage, “have you finished your business? Is the mighty mystery elucidated, unravelled, developed?”

“Ah, don’t teize me!” said I, and burst out crying.

“What can all this mean?” exclaimed he, as he jumped from the chaise, and vanished into the house.

I remained in the chaise till he came back.

“ Good news !” cried he. “ Her Ladyship wishes to see you, and apologize for her rudeness ; and I fancy,” added he with a significant nod, “ all will go well in a certain affair.”

“ Then she has told you every thing ?” said I. “ Yes, yes, I flatter myself she now finds civility the best of her game.”

I alighted, and her Ladyship ran forward to receive me. She pressed my hand, *my-deared* me twice in a breath, told me that Stuart had related my little history—that it was delicious—elegant---exotic ; and concluded with declaring, that positively I must remain at her house a few days, to talk over the great object of my visit.



Much as I mistrusted this sudden change in her conduct, I accepted her invitation, on the principle, that heroines usually go on a visit to their bitterest enemies. Besides, old Eftsoones would most probably seek me there.

Stuart appeared quite delighted at my determination, and after another private interview with her Ladyship, departed for London, to make further inquiries about Wilkinson.

Her Ladyship and I had then a long conversation, and she candidly confessed the probable justice of my claims. Poor creature! It will pain me to send her adrift upon the world; and, indeed, she was born for a better fate, her amusements are so elegant. She loves literature and perroquets, scrapes mezzotintos, and spends half her income in buying any thing that is hardly

to be had. Then her cabinet contains vases of onyx and sardonyx, cameos and intaglios; subjects in marine teeth, by Fiamingo and Benvenuto Cellini; and antique gems in iadestone, mochoa, coral, amber, and agate.

She has already presented me with several dresses, and she calls me the Lady Cherubina, — a sound which makes my little heart leap within me. Nay, she actually assured me, that her curiosity to know a real heroine was her chief inducement for having me on a visit; and that she considers an hour with me worth all her curiosities put together. What a delicate compliment! So could I do less, than assure her, in return, that when I dispossess her of the property, she shall never want a lodging or a meal?

Adieu.

## LETTER XXII.

THINK of my never recollecting, till I retired for the night, that I might be murdered ! How so probable a circumstance had escaped my penetration, is inconceivable ; but I never once thought of it. Lady Gwyn might (for aught I could tell to the contrary) be just as capable of assassination as the Marchesa di Vivaldi ; her motives were just as urgent ; and besides, I now remembered, that wherever I walked, during the day, a footman was watching me. I therefore searched my chamber, for concealed doors, or sliding pannels, where assassins might enter, but I could find none. I then resolved on

exploring the galleries, corridors, and suites of apartments, in hopes to discover some place of retreat, or some ragged record of my birth.

Accordingly, at the celebrated hour of midnight, I took the taper, and unbolting my door, stole softly along the lobby.

I stopped before one of our family pictures. It represented a lady, pale, pensive, and interesting; with flaxen hair and azure eyes, like my own. Was not that enough?

“Gentle image of my departed mother!” ejaculated I, kneeling before it, “may thy sainted original repose in peace!”

I then rose and glided onward. No sigh met my listening ear, no moan amidst the pauses of the gust.

With a trembling hand I opened a door, and found myself in a circular chamber, which was furnished with musical instruments. Intending to run my fingers over the keys of a piano, I walked towards it, till a low rustling made me pause. But what was my confusion, when I heard the mysterious machine on a sudden begin to sound ; not loudly, but (more terrible still !) with a hurried murmur ; as if all its chords were agitated at once, by the hand of some invisible spirit.

I did not faint, I did not shriek ; but I stood transfixed to the spot. The music ceased. I recovered courage, and advanced. The music began again ; and again I paused.

What ! should I shrink from lifting the simple lid of a mere piano ? What !

should I resign the palm of hardihood to Emily, who drew aside the black veil, and discovered the terrific wax-doll underneath it?

Emulation, enthusiasm, curiosity prompted me, and I rushed undaunted to the piano. Louder and more rapid grew the notes—my desperate hand raised the cover, and beneath it, I beheld a sight to me the most hideous and fearful upon earth,—a mouse!

I shrieked, and dropped the candle, which was instantly extinguished. The mouse ran by my feet; I flew towards the door, but missed it, and fell against a table; nor till after I had made a most alarming clamour, could I get out of the room. As I groped my way through the corridor, I heard voices and steps above stairs; and presently

lights appeared. The whole house was in confusion.

“ They are coming to murder me at last!” cried I, as I regained my chamber, and began heaping chairs and tables against the door. Presently several persons arrived at it, and called my name. I said not a word. They called louder, but still I was silent; till at length they burst open the door, and Lady Gwyn, with some of her domestics, entered. They found me kneeling in an attitude of supplication.

“ Spare, oh, spare me!” cried I.

“ My dear,” said her Ladyship, “ no harm shall happen you.”

“ Alas, then,” exclaimed I, “ what portends this nocturnal visit? this assault on my chamber? all these dreadful faces? Was it not enough, unhappy

woman, that thy husband attempted my life; but must thou, too, thirst for my blood?"

Lady Gwyn whispered a servant, who left the room; the rest raised, and put me to bed; while I read her Ladyship such a lecture on murder, as absolutely astonished her.

The servant soon after returned with a cup.

"Here, my love, is a composing draught for you," said her Ladyship, "Drink it, and you will be quite well to-morrow."

I took it with gladness, for I felt my brain strangely bewildered by my recent terror.

They then left a candle in my room, and departed.

My mind still remains uneasy; but



I have barricaded the door. I believe, however, I must now throw myself on the bed; for the draught has made me sleepy.

Adieu.

### LETTER XXIII.

O BIDDY GRIMES, I am poisoned! That fatal draught last night—why did I drink it?—dreadful is my agony. When this reaches you, all will be over.---But I would not die without letting you know.

Farewell for ever, my poor Biddy!  
I bequeath you all my ornaments.

## LETTER XXIV.

YES, my friend, you may well stare at receiving another letter from me ; and at hearing that I have not been poisoned in the least !

I must unfold the mystery. When I woke this morning, after my nocturnal adventure, I found my limbs so stiff, and such pains in all my bones, that I was almost unable to move. Judge of my horror and despair ; for instantly it flashed across my mind, that Lady Gwyn had poisoned me ! My whole frame underwent a sudden revulsion ; I grew sick, and rang the bell with violence ; nor ceased an instant, till half the servants, and Lady Gwyn herself, had burst into my chamber.

“If you have a remnant of mercy left,” cried I, “send for a doctor!”

“What is the matter, my dear,” said her Ladyship.

“Only that you have poisoned me, my dear,” cried I. “Dear, indeed! Oh, what will become of me! What will become of me!”

“Do, tell me,” said she, “how are you unwell?”

“I am sick to death,” cried I. “I have shooting pains in all my limbs, and half an hour sees me a corpse. Oh, indeed, you have done the business completely. Lady Eleanor Gwyn, I do here, on my death-bed, and with all my senses about me, solemnly, and, before your domestics, accuse you of having administered a deadly potion to me last night.”

“ Go for the physician,” said her Ladyship to a servant.

“ Yes,” cried I. “ Well may you feel alarmed. Your life will pay the forfeit of mine.”

“ You, however, need not feel alarmed,” said her Ladyship, “ for really, what I gave you last night, was to make you sleep.”

“ Yes,” cried I, “ the sleep of the grave ! O Lady Gwyn, what have I done, to deserve death at your hands ? And in such a manner too ! Had you shewn so much respect for custom and common decency, as to have offered me the potion in a bowl or a goblet, I might perhaps have suspected the treacherous intent. But you have added insult to injury ;---you have tricked me out of my life with a paltry

tea-cup ;---you have poisoned a girl of my pretensions, as vulgarly as you would a rat. Oh, what shall I do? What upon earth shall I do?"

Her Ladyship again began assuring me that I had taken a mere soporific; but I would not hear her, and at length, I sent every one out of the chamber, that I might prepare for my approaching end.

How to prepare was the question; I had never thought of death seriously, heroines so seldom die. Should I follow the precedent of the dying Heloise, who called her friends about her, got her chamber sprinkled with flowers and perfumes, and then yielded her gentle spirit, in a state of elegant inebriation with home-made wine, which she passed for Spanish? Alas! I had no friends,

no flowers, no perfumes; and as for wine, I could not abide the thoughts of it in a morning.

But amidst these reflections, a more grave, and less agreeable subject intruded itself---a future state. I strove to banish it, but it would not be repulsed. Yet surely, said I, as a heroine, I am a pattern of virtue; and what more is necessary? Yet at church (seldom as I frequented it), I had heard a very different doctrine. There I had heard, that the foundation of virtue is religion; and that if we are unacquainted with the precepts which prepare us for another world, we cannot be well instructed in those which fit us for this. Religion! alas, I knew nothing of it, except from novels; and there, though the devotion of heroines

is sentimental and graceful to a degree, it never influences their acts, or appears connected with their moral duties. It is so speculative and generalized, that it would answer the Greek or the Persian church, as well as the Christian; and none but the picturesque and enthusiastic part is presented; such as kissing a cross, chanting a vesper with elevated eyes, or composing a well-worded prayer.

The more I thought, the more horrible appeared my situation. I felt a confused idea, that I had led a worthless, if not a criminal life; that I had left myself without a friend in this world, and had not endeavoured to make one in the next. I became more and more agitated. I turned my thoughts back to the plan of expiring with a grace, but in vain; I then wrote

the note to you ; nothing could calm or divert my mind. The pains grew keener ; I felt sick at heart, my palate was parched, and every breath that I drew, I believed my last. My soul recoiled from the thought, and my brain became a chaos. Hideous visions of futurity rushed into my mind ; I lay shivering, groaning, and abandoned to the most deplorable despair.

In this state the physician found me. O what a relief, when he declared, that my disorder was nothing but a violent rheumatism, contracted, it appears, by my fall into the water the morning before ! Never was such a change from distraction to transport.

He prescribed for me ; but remarked, that I might remain ill a month, or recover in a week.

“ Positively,” said her Ladyship,



“you must get well in three days ; because then comes my ball, and I have set my heart on your doing wonders at it.”

I thanked her Ladyship, and begged pardon for my giddiness, in having accused her of murder ; while she laughed at my mistake, and made quite light of it. Noble relative ! But I dare say magnanimity is the family virtue.

I now felt just as miserable about losing the ball, as I had before felt about leaving the world. To lose it from any cause was provoking ; but to lose it by a rheumatism, was dreadful. Now, instead of being swathed in flannels, and making wry faces at labelled vials, had I some pale, genteel, sofa-reclining illness, I would bless my kind stars, and quaff heroic hartshorn, with

delight. Yet disguise thyself as thou wilt, hartshorn, still thou art a bitter draught; and though heroines in all novels have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account.

Indeed, I have to lament, that I am utterly unacquainted with those refined ailments, which assail all other celebrated girls. The consequence is my wanting that beauty, which, touched with the delicacy of illness, gains from sentiment what it loses in bloom; so that really this horse's constitution of mine is a terrible disadvantage to me. I know, if I could invent my own indispositions, I would strike out something infinitely beyond even the hec-tics and head-aches of my fair rivals. I believe there is no such complaint as

a sigh fever ; but one might fall ill of a scald from a lover's tear, or a classic scratch from the thorn of a rose.

Adieu.

### LETTER XXV.

THIS morning I woke almost well, and towards evening was able to appear below. Lady Gwyn had invited several of her friends ; so that I passed a delightful afternoon ; the charm, admiration, and astonishment of all.

When I retired to rest, I found this note on my toilette.

*To the Lady Cherubina.*

YOUR MOTHER LIVES ! and is confined in a subterranean vault of the

villa. At midnight two men will tap at your door, and conduct you to her. Be silent, courageous, and circumspect.

What a flood of new feelings gushed upon my soul, as I laid down the billet, and lifted my filial eyes to heaven! Mother---endearing name! I pictured that unfortunate lady, stretched on a mattrass of straw, her eyes sunken in their sockets, yet retaining a portion of their youthful fire; her frame emaciated, her voice feeble, her hand damp and chill. Fondly did I depict our meeting---our embrace; she gently pushing me from her, and baring my forehead to gaze on the lineaments of my countenance. All, all is convincing;

and she calls me the softened image of my noble father!

Two tedious hours I waited in extreme anxiety. At length the clock struck twelve; my heart beat responsive, and immediately the promised signal was made. I unbolted the door, and beheld two men masked and cloaked. They blindfolded me, and each taking an arm, led me along. Not a word passed. We traversed apartments, ascended, descended stairs; now went this way, now that; obliquely, circularly, angularly; till I began to imagine we were all the time in one spot.

At length my conductors stopped.

“Unlock the postern gate,” whispered one, “while I light a torch.”

“We are betrayed!” said the other, “for this is the wrong key.”

“Then thou beest the traitor,” cried the first.

“Thou liest, dost lie, and art lying!” cried the second.

“Take that!” exclaimed the first. A groan followed, and the wretch tumbled to the ground.

“You have killed him!” cried I, sickening with horror.

“I have only hamstrung him, my lady,” said the fellow. “He will be lame while ever he lives; but by St. Cripplegate, that won’t be long; for our captain has given him four ducats to murder himself in a month.”

He then burst open the gate; a sudden current of wind met us, and we hurried forward with incredible speed, while moans and smothered shrieks were heard at either side.

“Gracious goodness, where are we?” cried I.

“In the cavern of death!” said my conductor; “but never fear, Signora mia illustrissima, for the bravo Abelino is your povero devotissimo.”

On a sudden innumerable footsteps sounded behind us. We ran swifter.

“Fire!” cried a ferocious accent, almost at my ear; and there came a discharge of arms.

I stopped, unable to move, breathe, or speak.

“I am wounded all over, right and left, fore and aft, long ways and cross ways, Death and the Devil!” cried the bravo.

“Am I bleeding?” said I, feeling myself with my hands.

“No, blessed St. Fidget be praised!” answered he; “and now all is

safe, for the banditti have turned into the wrong passage.”

He then stopped, and unlocked a door.

“ Enter,” said he, “ and behold your mother !”

He led me forward, tore the bandage from my eyes, and retiring, locked the door after him.

Agitated already by the terrors of my dangerous expedition, I felt additional horror in finding myself within a dismal cell, lighted with a lantern ; where, at a small table, sat a woman suffering under a corpulency unparalleled in the memoirs of human monsters. Her dress was a patchwork of blankets and satins, and her grey tresses were like horse’s tails. Hundreds of frogs leaped about the floor ; a piece of mouldy bread, and a mug of water, lay on the table ; some



straw, strewn with dead snakes and skulls, occupied one corner, and the distant end of the cell was concealed behind a black curtain.

I stood at the door, doubtful, and afraid to advance; while the prodigious prisoner sat examining me all over.

At last I summoned courage to say, “I fear, Madam, I am an intruder here. I have certainly been shewn into the wrong room.”

“It is, it is my own, my only daughter, my Cherubina!” cried she, with a tremendous voice. “Come to my maternal arms, thou living picture of the departed Theodore!”

“Why, Ma’am,” said I, “I would with great pleasure, but I am afraid—Oh, Madam, indeed, indeed, I am quite sure you cannot be my mother!”

“Why not, thou unnatural girl?” cried she.

“Because, Madam,” answered I, “my mother was of a thin habit; as her portrait proves.”

“And so was I once,” said she. “This deplorable plumpness is owing to want of exercise. But I thank the Gods I am as pale as ever!”

“Heavens! no,” cried I. “Your face, pardon me, is a rich scarlet.”

“And is this our tender meeting?” cried she. “To disown me, to throw my fat in my teeth, to violate the lilies of my skin, with a dash of scarlet? Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle! Tell me, girl, will you embrace me, or will you not?”

“Indeed, Madam,” answered I, “I will presently.”

“ Presently !”

“ Yes, depend upon it I will. Only let me get over the first shock.”

“ Shock !”

Dreading her violence, and feeling myself bound to do the duties of a daughter, I kneeled at her feet, and said :

“ Ever respected, ever venerable author of my being, I beg thy maternal blessing !”

My mother raised me from the ground, and hugged me to her heart, with such cruel vigour, that, almost crushed, I cried out stoutly, and struggled for release.

“ And now,” said she, relaxing her grasp, “ let me tell you of my sufferings. Ten long years, I have eaten nothing but bread. Oh, ye favourite

pullets, oh, ye inimitable tit-bits, shall I never, never taste you more? It was but last night, that maddened by hunger, methought I beheld the Genius of dinner in my dreams. His mantle was laced with silver eels, and his locks were dropping with soups. He had a crown of golden fishes upon his head, and pheasants' wings at his shoulders. A flight of little tartlets fluttered about him, and the sky rained down comfits. As I gazed on him, he vanished in a sigh, that was impregnated with the fumes of brandy. Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle."

I stood shuddering, and hating her more and more every moment.

"Pretty companion of my confinement!" cried she, apostrophizing an enormous toad which she pulled out

of her bosom; "dear, spotted fondling, thou, next to my Cherubina, art worthy of my love. Embrace each other, my friends." And she put the hideous pet into my hand. I screamed and dropped it.

"Oh!" cried I, in a passion of despair, "what madness possessed me to undertake this execrable enterprize!" and I began beating with my hand against the door.

"Do you want to leave your poor mother?" said she, in a whimpering tone.

"Oh! I am so frightened!" cried I.

"You will spend the night here, however," said she; "and your whole life too; for the ruffian who brought you hither was employed by Lady Gwyn to entrap you."

When I heard this terrible sentence, my blood ran cold, and I began crying bitterly.

“Come, my love!” said my mother, “and let me clasp thee to my heart once more!”

“For goodness sake!” cried I, “spare me!”

“What!” exclaimed she, “do you spurn my proffered embrace again?”

“Dear, no, Madam,” answered I. “But—but indeed now, you squeeze one so!”

My mother made a huge stride towards me; then stood groaning and rolling her eyes.

“Help!” cried I, half frantic; “help! help!”

I was stopped by a suppressed titter of infernal laughter, as if from many

demons ; and on looking towards the black curtain, whence the sound came, I saw it agitated ; while about twenty terrific faces appeared peeping through slits in it, and making grins of a most diabolical nature. I hid my face with my hands.

“ ’Tis the banditti !” cried my mother.

As she spoke, the door opened, a bandage was flung over my eyes, and I was borne away half senseless, in some one’s arms ; till at length, I found myself alone in my own chamber.

Such was the detestable adventure of to-night. Oh, Biddy, that I should live to meet this mother of mine ! How different from the mothers that other heroines rummage out in northern turrets and ruined chapels ! I am out of

all patience. Liberate her I must, of course, and make a suitable provision for her too, when I get my property ; but positively, never will I sleep under the same roof with—(ye powers of filial love forgive me !) such a living mountain of human horror.

Adieu.

## LETTER XXVI.

THE morning of the ball, I woke free from all remains of my late indisposition, except that captivating paleness, which adds interest without diminishing beauty.

I rose with the sun, and taking a Chinese vase in my hand, tripped into the parterre, to collect the dew that



glistened on the blossoms. I filled the piece of painted earth with the nectar of the sky, and returned.

During the day, I took nothing but honey, milk, and dried conserves; a repast the most likely to promote that ethereal character which I purposed adopting at night.

Towards evening, I laved my limbs in a bath; and just as the sun had waved his last crimson banner over the horizon, I began my toilette.

So variable is fashion, that I determined not to follow its laws; since these might be completely exploded in a month; and must become quite antiquated long before my life is written. For instance, do we not already abhor Evelina's and Harriet Byron's powdered, pomatumed, and frizzled hair?

It was, therefore, my plan to dress by classical models, and to copy the immortal toilette of Greece.

Having first disrobed myself from head to foot, I took an entire piece of the finest cambric, and twice entwined it around my shoulders and bosom, and twice enveloped my limbs in its folds; till, while it delineated the outline of my shape, it veiled the tincture of my skin. I then flung over it a drapery of embroidered gauze, whose unimplicated simplicity gave to my perfect figure the spirit of an antique statue. An apparent tissue of woven air, it fell like a vapour round me. A zone and a clasp prettily imprisoned my waist; and my graceful arms, undegraded by gloves, were bare to the shoulder. Half my hair felt the bondage of a bodkin, and

half floated over my neck in native ringlets. As I could not well wear my leg naked, I hid it under a texture of knitted silk ; and lastly, I laced the picturesque sandal on my little foot ; which resembled that of a youthful Thetis, or of a fugitive Atalanta.

I then bathed my face with the dew of the morning, refreshed my tresses with the balmy waters of the distilled rose, and sprinkled my drapery with liquid lavender ; so that I really moved in an ambient atmosphere of odours.

Behold me now, dressed to a charm, to a criticism. Here was no sloping, or goring, or seaming, or frilling, or flouncing. Manufactured mechanism of millinery ! No tedious papillotes, or unpoetical pins were here. A clasp, a zone, and a bodkin, accomplished all.

As I surveyed my form in the mirror, I was enraptured at its Sylphic delicacy. You would imagine that a sigh could dissipate the drapery; and its ærial effect was as if a fairy were to lift the filmy gossamer on her spear, and lightly fling it over a rose-bud.

I now sat down and read Ossian, to store my mind with ideas for conversation. I likewise turned over other books; since, having never mixed among fashionable circles, I could not talk that nothingness, which is every thing in high life. Nor, indeed, if I could, would I; because, as a heroine, it was my part to mould my sentences for immortality.

About appearing in a world, of whose laws and customs I was ignorant, I resolved to adopt such manners as should

not be dependent upon place, time, or fashion. In short, to copy primeval, generalized, unsophisticated nature, and Grecian statues.

As I had formed myself on these models, long before I knew the world, my graces were all original, and fit for the pencil; so that if I had not the temporary mannerisms of a marchioness, I had, at least, the immortal movements of a seraph. Words are local, and become obsolete, but the language of gesture is universal and eternal.

As for smiles, I felt myself a perfect adept in all that were ever ascribed to heroines;—the fatal smile, the smile such as precedes the dissolution of sainted goodness, the fragment of a broken smile, and the sly smile that creates the little dimple on the left side of the little mouth.

At length the most interesting moment of my life arrived ; the moment when I was to burst, like a new planet, on the fashionable hemisphere. All the company had assembled. I descended the stairs, and pausing at the door, tried to tranquillize my fluttered spirits. I then assumed an air-lifted figure, barely touching the ground, and glided into the room.

The company were walking in groups, or sitting.

“ That is she ;—there she is ;—look, look ! ” was whispered on all sides. Every eye turned towards me, while I felt at once elevated and opprest.

Lady Gwyn advanced, took my hand, and led me to a sofa. A semicircle of astonished admirers, head over head, ranged itself in my front, and a cordial smile of approbation illuminated every

countenance. There I sat, in all the diffidence of a simple and inexperienced recluse; while, with an expression of sweet wildness, and retiring consciousness, was observable a certain susceptibility too exquisite to admit of lasting peace.

At last a spruce and puny fop stepped from amidst the group, and seated himself beside me.

“This was a charming day, Ma’am,” said he, as he admired the accurate turn of his ankle.

“Yes,” answered I, “so blithe was the morn, when I strayed into the garden, that methought the twins of Latona had met to propitiate their rites. Blushes, like their own roses, coloured the vapours; and rays, pure as their thoughts, gilded the foliage.”

The company murmured applause.

“ ’Tis a pity that this evening was wet,” said he; “ for were it fine, what a beautiful description of it would you not have given us.”

“ Ah, my good friend,” cried I, wreathing my favourite smile; and laying the rosy tip of my finger on his arm; “ such, such is man. His morning rises in sunshine, and his evening sets in rain.”

While the company were again expressing their approbation, I overheard one of them whisper to the fop:—

“ Come, play the girl off, and let her have your best nonsense.”

The fop winked at him, and again turned towards me; while I sat shocked and astonished, but collecting all my powers.



“ See,” said he, “ how you have fascinated every eye. Actually you are the queen of the bees, with all your swarm about you.”

“ And with my drone too,” said I, bowing slightly.

“ Happy in being a drone,” said he, “ so he but sips of your honey.”

“ Rather say,” cried I, “ that he deserves my sting.”

“ Ah,” said he, laying his hand on his heart; “ your eyes have already fixed a sting here.”

“ Then your tongue,” returned I, “ is more innocent than my eyes; for though it has the venom of a sting, it wants the point.”

The company laughed, and he coloured.

“ Do I tease you?” said he, trying

to rally. "How cruel! Actually I am so abashed, as you may perceive, that my modesty flies into my face."

"Then," said I, "your modesty must be very hard run for a refuge."

Here the room echoed with acclamations.

"I am not at a loss about an answer," said he, looking round him, and forcing a smile. "I am not indeed."

"Then pray let me have it," said I, "for folly never becomes truly ludicrous till it tries to be severe."

"Brava! Brava!" cried an hundred voices at once: away the little drone flew from my hive, and I tossed back my ringlets with an infantine shake of the head.

The best of it is, that every word he

said will one day appear in print. Men who converse with a heroine should talk for the press, or they will make but a silly figure in her memoirs.

“ I admire your spirit, my dear,” said Lady Gwyn, sitting down beside me. “ That puppy deserves every severity. Think of his sitting in his dressing-gown, a full hour after he has shaved, that the blood may subside from his face. He protests his surprise how men can find pleasure in running after a nasty fox ; cuts out half his own coat at his tailor’s ; has a smile, and a ‘ pretty ! ’ for every thing ; sits silent till one of his four topics is introduced, and then lisping a descant on the last opera, the last boxing-match, the last race, or the last sonnet, he drains his last idea, and has nothing left for

the remainder of the night, but a ‘bless me,’ and a bow. Such insects should come abroad only at butterfly-season; and even then, in a four-wheeled band-box, while monkeys strew the way with mignonette. No, I can never forgive his having gone to Lady Bontein’s masquerade, though he had a card from me, and though he knew that she gave it on the same evening for the purpose of thinning my party.’”

“And pray,” said I, “who is Lady Bontein?”

“That tall personage yonder,” answered her Ladyship; “with a gentlemanly face, and one shoulder of the Gothic order. She has now been forty years endeavouring to look handsome, and she still trusts, that by diligent perseverance she will succeed. See

how she freshens her smiles, and labours to look at ease ; though she has all the awkwardness of a milkmaid, without the simplicity. She pored over Latin, till she made her mind as dead as the language itself. Then she writes well-bred sonnets about a tear, or a primrose, or a daisy ; but nothing larger than a lark ; and talks botany with the men, as she thinks science an excuse for indecency. Nay, she affects the bible too ; but they say she once threw it at her footman's head, without any affectation at all. However, my party of to-night will distract her dearly ; for I shall introduce a little *Scena*, classical, appropriate, and almost unique, which she can never outdo. The plan of it is a triumphal procession, and the object of

it is to grace your entrance into life, by conferring a peculiar mark of distinction on you."

"On me!" cried I. "What mark? I deserve no mark, I am sure."

"Indeed you do," said she. "All the world acknowledges you the first heroine in it; and therefore, I mean to celebrate your merits, by crowning you, just as Corinne was crowned in the capitol."

"Dear Lady Gwyn," cried I, panting with delight; "sure you are not— Ah, are you serious?"

"Most serious, my love," answered she, "and the ceremony will soon commence. You may perceive that the young men and girls have left the room. It is to prepare for the procession; and now excuse me, as I must assist them."

During half an hour, I remained in an agony of anxious expectation.

At last, I heard a confused murmur about the door, and a gentleman ran forward, to clear a passage. A lane was soon formed of the guests; and fancy my feelings, when I beheld the promised procession entering.

First appeared several little children, who came tripping towards me; some with baskets of flowers, and others with vases of odorous waters, or censers of fragrant fire. After them advanced a tall youth of noble port, and conspicuous in a scarlet robe, that trailed behind him with graceful dignity. On his head was a plat of palm, his left hand held a long wand, and his right the destined crown of laurel and myrtle. Behind him came maidens, two by two, and

hand in hand. They had each a drapery of white muslin flung negligently round them, and knotted just under the shoulder: while their luxuriant hair shaded their bosoms. The youths came next, habited in flowing vestments of white linen.

The leader approached, and making profound obeisance, took my hand. I rose, bowed, and we proceeded with a measured step out of the room; while the children ran before us, tossing their little censers, scattering pansies, and sprinkling liquid sweets. The nymphs and youths followed in couples, and the company closed the procession. We crossed the hall, ascended the staircase, and passed along the corridor, till we reached the ball-room. The folding doors then flew open, as if with



wings ; and a scene presented itself, which almost baffles description.

It was an oval apartment, walled all round with a luxuriant texture of interwoven foliage. Branches of the broad chesnut and berried arbutus were relieved by flowering lauristinas, and acacias ; while here and there, within the branches, clusters of lamps intermixed their coloured rays, and poured a river of light upon the leaves. The floor was chalked into circular compartments, and each depicted some scene of romance. There I saw Mortimer and his Amanda, Delville and his Cecilia, Valancourt and his Emily. The ceiling was of moss, illuminated with circles of lamps ; and from the centre of each circle, a basket was seen peeping, and half inverted, as if about to

shower its chaplets and ripe fruitage upon our heads.

At the upper end, I beheld a large harbour, elevated on a sloping bank of turf. Its outside was intertwined with jessamine, honeysuckle, and eglantine; tufted with clumps of sunflowers, lilies, and hollyhocks, and hung with clusters of grapes, and trails of intricate ivy; while all its interior was so studded with innumerable lamps, that it formed one amazing arch of variegated fire. The seat was framed of transparent spars and crystals; and the footstool was a heap of roses. Just from under this footstool, and through the turf, came gushing a little rill, that first tumbled its waters down some jutting stones, then separated to the right and left, and ran

along a channel, embroidered with flowery banks; till it was lost, at either side, amidst overshadowing branches.

The moment I set foot in the room, a stream of invisible music, as if from above, and softened by distance, came swelling on my enraptured ear. Thrice we circled this enchanted chamber, and trod to the solemn measure. I was amazed, entranced; I felt elevated to the empyrean. I moved with the grandeur of a goddess, and the grace of a vision.

At length my conductor led me across the rivulet, into the arbour. I sat down, and he stood beside me. The children lay in groups upon the grass, the youths and virgins ranged themselves along the opposite bank of the streamlet, and the company stood behind them.

The master of this august ceremony now waved his wand : the music ceased, all was silent, and he thus began.

“ My countrymen and countrywomen,

“ Behold our Cherubina ; behold the most celebrated woman of our island. Need I recount her accomplishments ? Her impassioned sensibility, her exquisite art in depicting the delicate and affecting relations between the beauties of nature, and the deep emotions of the soul ? Need I dwell on those elegant adventures, those sorrows, and those horrors, which she has experienced ; I might almost say, sought ? Oh ! no. The globe already resounds with them, and their fame will descend to the most remote posterity.

“ Who can question her eloquence, the pensiveness of her epithets, and the querulous sweetness of her style? Are not her ancestors illustrious? Are not her manners fascinating? Alas! to this question, some of our hearts beat audible response. Her’s is the head of a Sappho, deficient alone in the voluptuous languor, which should characterize the countenance of that enamoured Lesbian.

“ To crown her, therefore, as the patroness of arts, the paragon of charms, and the first of heroines, is to gratify our feelings, more than her own: by enabling us to confer immortal honours on loveliness and on virtue.”

He ceased amidst peals of applause. I rose;—and in an instant, it was the stillness of death. Then with a timo-

rous, yet ardent air, I thus addressed the assembly.

“ My countrymen, my countrywomen !

“ How I happen to deserve the beautiful eulogium just pronounced, I am sure I cannot conceive. Till this flattering moment, I never knew that the globe resounds with my praises, that my style is sweet, and my head a Sappho's. But unconsciousness of merit was ever the characteristic of a heroine.

“ The gratitude which my words cannot express, my deeds shall prove. Depend upon it, I will persevere in the heroic career I have begun ; I am fond of it almost to a folly ; and I now pledge myself, that neither rank nor riches (which, from my vocation, I am peculiar liable to), shall ever make

me shun refined Adversity. For, from her, I have acquired whatever little sympathies and sensibilities I may possess ; and surely, since adversity thus encreases virtue, it must be a virtue to seek adversity.

“ England, my friends, is now the depository of all the virtue that survives. She is the ark that floats upon the waters of the deluge. But what preserves her virtuous ? Her women. And whence arises their purity ? From education.

“ To you, then, my fair auditory, I would enjoin a diligent cultivation of learning. But oh ! beware what books you peruse ; for, trust me, some are as injurious as others are salutary. I cannot point out to you the mischievous class, because I have never read them ;

but indubitably, the most useful are novels and romances. Such as I am, these, these alone have made me. These, by depicting the heroines who were sublimated almost above terrestriality, teach the less gifted portion of womankind to reach what is uncommon, in striving at what is unattainable; to despise the follies and idlenesses of the mere worker of samplers, and to entertain a taste for that sensibility, whose tear is the melting of a pearl, whose blush is the sunshine of the cheek, and whose sigh is more costly than the breeze, which comes odoured with oriental frankincense."

I spoke, and a thousand thunders of acclamation shook the arbour.

The priest of the ceremony now raises the crown on high, then lowers



it by slow degrees, and holds it suspended over my head. Letting down my tresses, and folding my hands across my bosom, I throw myself upon my knees, and incline forward to receive it.

I AM CROWNED.

At the same moment, shouts, and drums, and trumpets, burst upon my bewildered ear, in a storm of harmony. The youths and maidens make obeisance; I rise, press my hand to my heart, and bow deeply. Tears start into my eyes. I feel far above mortality.

A harp was now brought to the bower; and they requested that I would sing and play an improvisatore, like Corinne. What should I do? for I knew nothing of the harp, but a few chords! In this difficulty, I recollect-

ed a heroine, who lived in an old castle, with only an old steward, his old wife, and an old lute; and who, notwithstanding, as soon as she stepped into society, played and sang, like angels, by intuition.

I therefore felt reassured, and sat to the harp. I struck a few low Lydian notes, and cast a timid glance around me. For the first minute, my voice was not louder than a sigh; and my accompaniment was a harmonic chord, swept at intervals. The words came from the moment.

“Where is my blue-eyed chief? said the white-bosomed daughter of Erin, as the wave kissed her foot; and wherefore went he to the fight of heroes? She saw a dim figure rise before her, like a mist from the valley. Pale

grew her cheek, as the blighted leaf in autumn. Your lover, it shrilly shrieked, sleeps among the dead, like a broken thistle amidst dandelions ; but his spirit, like the thistly down, has ascended into the skies. The maiden heard ; she ran, she flew, she sprang from a rock. The waves closed over her. Peace to the daughter of Erin !”

As I sang, “ she ran, she flew,” my winged fingers fluttered along the strings, light as a swallow along a little lake, when he touches it with the utmost feather of his pinion. But while I sang, “ peace to the daughter of Erin !” my voice, as it died over the faint vibration of the chords, had all the heart-breaking softness of an Eolian lyre ; so woeful was it, so wistful, so wildered. “ Viva ! viva !” resounded

through the room. At the last cadence, I dropped one arm at my side, and hanging the other on the harp, leaned my languishing head upon it.

A sudden disturbance aroused me from my trance. I raised my head, and beheld — what? — Can you imagine what? No, my friend, not to the day of judgment. I saw, in short, my great mother come striding towards me, with outspread arms, and calling, “My daughter, my daughter!” in a voice that might waken the dead.

My heart died within me: down I darted from the arbour, and ran for shelter behind Lady Gwyr.

“Give me back my daughter!” vociferated the dreadful woman, advancing close to her ladyship.

“Oh! do no such thing!” whispered

I, pulling her Ladyship by the sleeve.  
“ Take half---all my property ; but  
don’t be the death of me !”

“ What are you muttering there,  
Miss ?” cried my mother, espying me.

“ Indeed, Ma’am,” stammered I,  
“ I am---I am taking your part.”

“ Is it by grinning at me over that  
wretch’s shoulder ?” cried she.

“ Grinning at you, Ma’am ?” said I.  
“ I never grinned at any lady since I  
was born, much less at my respect-  
ed——”

“ Respected what ?”

“ Mother, respected mother.”

“ Who presumed to liberate this wo-  
man ?” cried Lady Gwyn.

“ The Condottieri,” said my mother,  
“ headed by the great Damno Sulphu-  
reo Volcanoni.”

“Then return to your prison, this moment,” cried Lady Gwyn.

My mother fell on her knees, and began blubbering ; while the guests got round and interceded for her. I too thought it my duty to say something (my mother all the time sobbing horribly); till, at length, Lady Gwyn consented—for my sake she said,—that the wretch should remain in the room one hour.

My mother then begged a morsel of meat, as she declared she had not eaten any these ten years. Immediately, a small table, furnished with a cold turkey and a decanter of wine, was laid in the bower. The moment she perceived it, she ran, sat down, and began devouring with such avidity, that I was thunderstruck. One wing soon went ; the second shared the fate

of its companion, and now she set about an inordinate slice of the breast.

“What a charming appetite your dear mother has got!” said several of the company to me. I confessed it, but assured them that hunger did not run in our family. Her appetite at last satiated, she next assailed the wine. Glass after glass disappeared with inconceivable rapidity, and every glass went to my heart. “She will be quite intoxicated!” thought I; while my fears for the hereditary honour of our house overcoming my personal terrors, I had the resolution to steal across, and whisper:

“Mother, if you have any regard for your daughter, and respect for your ancestors, drink no more.”

“No more than this decanter lovee!” cried she, lifting it to her lips.

At that moment the violins quavered their invitation.

“Hey diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle!” said she, frightfully frisking down from the bower, “who is for a dance?”

“I am,” answered my friend, the little fop, advancing and taking her hand.

“Then,” said she, “we will waltz, if you please.”

Santa Maria!—Waltz!

A circle was cleared, and they began whirling each other round at a fearful rate,—or rather she him; for he was like a plaything in her hands; and had he let go his grasp, up he would certainly have pitched among the branches,



and have stuck there, like King Charles in the oak.

At last, while I was standing, a statue of shame, and wondering how any human being could act so ridiculous a part, this miserable woman, overcome with wine and waltzing, fell flat upon the floor; and was carried from the room between four grinning footmen.

I could contain no longer: the character of my family demanded a prompt explanation, and with tearful eyes, I desired to be heard. Silence was obtained.

“ I beseech and implore of this assembly,” said I, “ to credit me, while I protest, that I had neither act, nor part, in the conduct of that unfortunate person, who has thus disgraced her-

self. Nay, I never even saw her, till I came to this house ; and that I may never see her again, I pray heaven. I hate her, I dread her ; and I now declare most unequivocally, that I do not believe the woman my mother at all. She bears no resemblance to the portrait above stairs ; and as she is stark mad, her imagining herself to be my mother, might very well happen ; for they say that mad persons are apt to fancy themselves great people. No, my malignant star ordained us to meet, that she might place me in awkward situations by her vulgarity ; just as Mrs. Garnet, the supposed mother of the Beggar Girl, used to place her. I am certain this is the case ; nothing can alter my opinion ; and therefore, I thus publicly renounce her, disown her, and wash

my hands of her, now, now, and for ever, and for ever !”

The company coincided in my sentiments, and applauded my determination.

Dancing was then proposed : the men sauntered about the room for partners ; the mothers walked their daughters up and down, to shew their paces ; and their daughters turned away their heads when they saw their favourites approaching to ask them. Ugliness and diamonds occupied the top of the set ; the beauties stood in the centre, and the motley couples at the bottom ; — patriarchs with misses of fifteen ; and striplings, who were glad to be thought men, with antiques, who were sorry to be called maids. Other unfortunates, drest to a pin, yet noticed

by nobody, sat protruding the supercilious lip at a distance.

And now the merry maze commenced. But what mutilated steps, what grotesque graces! One girl sprang and sprawled, the terror of every ankle; and with a clear idea of infinite space, shewed that she had no notion of time. Another, not deigning to dance, only moved; while her poor partner was seen helping her in, like a tired jade to the distance-post. This exchanged elegance for a *flic flac*; that swam down the set; a third cut her way through it; and a fourth, who, by her longevity could not be dancing for a husband, appeared, by her earnestness, to be dancing for her life.

All this delighted me highly, because it would shew my graces to the greater

advantage. My partner was the gentleman who had crowned me; and now, when my turn came, a general whisper among the spectators, and their sudden hurry towards me, proved that much was expected from my performance. I would not disappoint them for worlds; besides, it was incumbent on me to stamp a marked dissimilarity between my supposed mother, and myself, in every thing; and to call forth admiration, as much as she had excited contempt.

And now, with my right foot behind, and the point of it but just touching the ground, I leaned forward on my left, and stood as if in act to ascend from this vale of tears into regions of eternal beatitude.

The next moment the music gave

the signal, and I began. Despising the figure of the common dance, I wandered through all the intricacies of the dance of Ariadne; imitating in my circular and oblique motions the harmonious movements of the spheres; and resembling in my light and playful form, the Horæ of Bathycles. Sometimes with a rapid flight, and glowing smile, I darted, like a herald Iris, through the mazes of the set; sometimes assuming the dignity of a young Diana, I floated in a swimming languishment; and sometimes, like a pastoral nymph of Languedoc, capriciously did I bend my head on one side, and dance up insidiously. What a Hebe!

I happened not to see my partner from the time I began till I had end-

ed; but when I flew, like a lapwing, to my seat, he followed, and requested that I would accept the assurances of his high admiration. I prettily reprov'd his flattery, with arch anger, and a pouting playfulness.

Soon afterwards, waltzing was introduced.

“ You have already imitated Ida’s dancing,” said he. “ Will you now imitate Charlotte’s, and allow me, like Werter, to hold in my arms the most lovely of women; to fly with her, like the wind, and lose sight of every other object?”

I consented; he led me forth, and clasping my waist, began the circuitous exercise of waltzing. Round and round we flew, and swifter and swifter; till my head grew quite giddy. Lamps,

trees, dresses, faces, all appeared to be shattered and huddled together, and sent whisking round the room in a vortex.

But, oh, my friend, how shall I find language to describe the fatal termination of an evening so propitious at the commencement? I blush as I write, till the reflected crimson dyes my paper. For in the midst of my rotatory motion, while heaven seemed earth, and earth seemed heaven; the zone, upon which all my attire depended, and by which it was all confined, on a sudden burst asunder, and in the next whirl, more than half my dress dropped at my feet! Another revolution, and I had acted Diana to fifty Acteons; but I shrieked, and extricating myself from my partner, sank upon the floor,



amidst the wreck of my drapery. The ladies ran, ranged themselves round me, and cast a mantle over my half-revealed charms. I felt too miserable, and indeed too giddy to rise; so they lifted me between them, and bore me, in slow procession, from the room. It was the funeral of Modesty; but the pall was supported by tittering Malice.

I hurried into bed, and cried myself asleep.

I cannot think, much less write of this disaster, with common fortitude. I wonder whether Musidora could be considered a palliative parallel? If not, and that my biographer records it, I am undone.

Adieu.

## LETTER XXVII.

YESTERDAY Lady Gwyn took me, at my particular request, to visit Monkton Castle, an old ruin, within a few miles of us. It forms part of that property which she now holds; and consequently must devolve to me, as soon as I substantiate my title and my birth.

The gateway was blockaded with stones, so that I could not enter the building; but outside, it looked admirably blank and desolate. I mean, at some future period, to furnish it like Udolpho, and other castles of romance, and to reside there during the howling months.

After dinner her Ladyship left me alone on the sofa, and went to superintend the unpacking of some beautiful china. Evening had flung her grey mantle over the flowerets; a delicious indolence thrilled through my limbs, and I felt all that languor and vacuity, which the want of incident must ever create in the feeling mind.

“Were even some youth on a visit here,” thought I, “who would conceive an unhappy passion for me;—had her Ladyship but one persecuting son, what scenes might happen! Suppose at this moment, the door were to open, and he to enter, with a quick step, and booted and spurred. He starts on seeing me. Never had I looked so lovely. “Heavens!” murmurs he, “’tis a divinity!” then re-

collecting himself, he advances with a respectful bow. “ Pardon this intrusion,” says he; “ but I—really I—”. I rise, and colouring violently, mutter, without looking at him: “ I wonder where her Ladyship can be?” But as I am about to pass him, he snatches my hand, and leading me back, says:—“ Suffer me to detain you a moment. This occasion, long desired, and at last obtained, must not be relinquished. Prevented by the jealous care of a fond mother, from beholding those charms, I have sought and found a thousand opportunities, on the stairs---in the garden---through the shrubbery. Fatal opportunities, which robbed me of my peace for ever! Yes, charming Cherubina, you have undone me. That airy form; those mild, yet animated eyes;

those lips, more delicious than the banquet of the gods---" "Really, Signor," says I, in all the pleasing simplicity of maiden embarrassment, "this language is as improper for me to hear as for you to express." "It is improper," cries he, "for it is inadequate." "Yes," says I, "inadequate to the respect I deserve as the guest of your mother." "Ah!" exclaims he, "why should the guest imitate the harshness of the hostess?" "That she may not," says I, "countenance the follies of the son. Signor, I desire you will unhand me." "Never!" cries he; "till you say you pity me. O, my Cherubina; O, my soul's idol!"—and he drops upon his knee, and grasps my hand; when behold, the door opens, and Lady

Gwyn appears at it! Astonishment and dismay make statues of the whole party. "Godfrey, Godfrey," says her Ladyship, "is this the conduct that I requested of you? This, to seek clandestine interviews, where I had prohibited even an open acquaintance? And for thee, fair unfortunate," turning towards me, with that mild look, which cuts more than a thousand sarcasms; "for thee, lovely frail one, thou must seek some other asylum." Her sweet eyes swim in tears. I fling myself at her feet. "I am innocent," I cry, "innocent as the little fawn that frisks itself to repose by the bubbling fountain." She smiles incredulous. "Come," says she, taking my hand, "let me lead you to your apartment." "Stay, in mercy stay!" cries Godfrey,

rushing between us and the door. She waves him aside. I reach my room. Nothing can console me. I am all despair. The maid taps, with a slip of paper from Godfrey. "Oh, Cherubina," it says, "how my heart is torn for you! As you value your fame, perhaps your life, meet me to-night, at twelve, in the shrubbery." After a long struggle, I resolve to meet him. 'Tis twelve, the winds are abroad, the shower descends. I fling on something, and steal into the shrubbery. I find him there before me. He thanks me ten thousand, thousand times for my kindness, my condescension; and by degrees, leads me towards the avenue, where I see a chaise. I shrink back; he prays, implores; and at length, snatching me in his arms, is

about to force me into the vehicle, when on a sudden---“Hold, villain!” cries a voice, It is the voice of Stuart! I shriek, and drop to the ground. The clashing of swords resounds over my contested body, and I faint. On recovering, I find myself in a small, but decent chamber, with an old woman and a beautiful girl watching beside me. “St. Catherine be praised,” exclaims the young peasant, “she comes to herself.” “Tell me,” I cry, “is he murdered?” “The gentleman is dead, sure enough, miss,” says the woman. I laugh frantic, and point my finger. “Ha! look yonder,” I cry; “see his mangled corpse, mildly smiling, even in death. See, they fight; he falls.---Barbarous Godfrey! valiant, generous, unfortunate Stuart! And



hark, hear you that? 'Tis the bell tolling, tolling, tolling!" During six weeks I languish under this dreadful brain-fever. Slowly I recover. A low melancholy preys upon me, and I am in the last stage of a consumption. But though I lose my bloom, illness touches my features with something more than human. One evening, I had gotten my chair on the green before the door, and was watching the sun as he set in a blaze of gold. "And oh!" exclaimed I, "soon must I set like thee, fair luminary;"---when I am interrupted by a stifled sigh, just behind me. I turn. Heaven and earth! who should be leaning over me, with looks of unutterable love, but---Stuart! In an instant, I see him, I shriek, I run, I leap into his arms.——

"Unfortunate leap; for it wakened

me from a delicious reverie, and I found myself in the arms,---not of Stuart,---but of the old butler! Down we came together, and smashed to atoms a vase of superb china, which he was just bringing into the room.

“What will my lady say?” cried he, rising and collecting the fragments.

“She will smile ineffably,” answered I, “and make a moral reflection upon the instability of sublunary things.”

He shook his head, and went on with his work of affliction; while I hastened to the glass, where I found my face flushed from my reverie, my hair dishevelled, and my long eyelashes wetted with tears. I perceived too that my dress had suffered a terrible rent by my fall.

Hardly was I recomposed, when her

Ladyship returned, and called for tea.

“How did you tear your robe, my love?” said she.

“By a fall that I got just now;” replied I. “Sure never was such an unfortunate fall!”

“Nay, child,” said she, rallying me, “though a martyr to the tender sensibilities, you must not become a victim to torn muslin.”

“I am extremely distressed, however,” said I.

“But why so?” cried she. “It was an accident, and all of us are awkward at times. Life has too many serious miseries to admit of vexation about trifles.”

“There now!” cried I, with delight. “I declare I told the butler, when I

broke the china vase, that you would make a moral reflection."

"Broke the--Oh! mercy, did you break my beautiful china vase?"

"I did, indeed," answered I, in a tone of the most assuasive sweetness.

"You did?" exclaimed she, with a voice that stunned me. "How dared you go near it? How dared you even look at it? You, who are not fit company for crockery, much less china;—a crazed creature, that I brought into my house to divert my guests. You a title? You a beauty?" "Pray, Lady Gwyn," said I, "be calm under this calamity. Trust me, life has too many serious miseries to admit of vexation about trifles."

Her Ladyship rose, with her cheeks inflamed, and her eyes glittering.

I ran terrified out of the room ; then up stairs, and into the nearest bed-chamber. It was her Ladyship's ; and this circumstance struck me as most providential ; since, in her present mood, she would probably compel me to quit the house ; so that I had now the only opportunity possible, of ransacking her caskets and cabinets, for memorials of my birth.

I therefore began the search ; but was interrupted by hearing a small voice cry, “ get out ! ”

Much amazed, I looked round, and perceived her Ladyship's favourite parrot.

“ Get out ! ” said the parrot again.

“ Yes,” I will let thee out, cost what it will,” cried I.

So with much sensibility, and in-

deed, very little spleen, I took the bird from its cage, and liberated it through the window.

At last, after having examined several drawers, I found a casket; opened it, and beheld within, a miniature set round with inestimable diamonds, and bearing a perfect resemblance to the portrait in the gallery,—face, attitude, attire, every thing!

“Relic of my much injured house!” exclaimed I. “Image of my sainted mother, never will I part with thee!”

“What are you doing in my room?” cried Lady Gwyn, as she burst into it. “How is this? All my dresses about the floor! my drawers, my casket open!—And, as I live, here is the miniature gone! Why, you graceless little thing, are you robbing me?”

“ Madam,” answered I, “ that miniature belongs to my family ; I have recovered it at last ; and let me see who will take it from me.”

“ You are more knave than fool,” said her Ladyship : “ give it back this instant, or, on my honour, I will expose you before the servants.”

“ You dare not,” cried I ; “ for you are ruined, should this swindling affair of the picture transpire. I do not mean to say I would hang your Ladyship ;---far from it ;---but then you know, I might blast your character beyond all recovery. O Lady Gwyn, where is your hereditary honour ? where is your feeling ? where is your dignity ?”

“ Where is my parrot ?” shrieked her Ladyship.

“Inhaling life, and fragrance, and freedom amidst the clouds!” exclaimed I. “For I have sent it flying through the window.”

Her Ladyship ran towards me, but I passed her, and made the best of my way down stairs; while she followed, calling, stop thief! Too well I knew and rued the dire expression; nor stopped an instant, but hurried out of the house—through the lawn—down the avenue—into a field;—the servants in hot pursuit. Not a moment was to be lost: a drowning man, you know, will grasp at straws, so the poor Cherubina crept for refuge under some hay.

But whether they found me there, or how long I remained there, or what has become of me since, or what is



likely to become of me hereafter, you shall learn in my next.

Adieu.

### LETTER XXVIII.

I REMAINED in my disagreeable situation till night closed around, and the pursuit appeared over. I then rose, and walked through the fields, without any settled intention. Terror was now succeeded by bitter indignation at the conduct of Lady Gwyn, who had dared to drive me from my hereditary house, and vilify me as a common thief. Insupportable insult! Unparalleled degradation! Was there no revenge? no remedy?

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hands over a few faded embers. I begged permission to rest myself for a short time: the woman, after eyeing me keenly, consented, and I sat down. I then entered into conversation, represented myself as a wandering stranger in distress, and inquired whether I could procure a lodging about the neighbourhood. The woman assured me that I could not; and on perceiving me much disconcerted at the disappointment, coarsely, but cordially, offered me accommodation in her hut. I had no possible alternative; so the fire was replenished, some brown bread and sour milk (the last of their store), produced; and while we sat round this unsavoury supper, I requested of the poor woman to relate her little history.

She told me, with many tears and episodes, that her daughter and son-in-law, who had hitherto supported her, died of a fever, about a month ago, and left these children behind, without any means of subsistence, except what they procured from the charitable.

Indeed, their appearances corroborated this account; for Famine had set her meagre finger on their faces. I wished to pity them, but their whining, their dirtiness, and their vulgarity, disgusted more than interested me. I nauseated the brats, and abhorred the haggard hostess. How it happens, I know not, but the misery that looks alluring on paper, is almost always repulsive in real life. I turn with distaste from a ragged beggar, or a distressed tradesman; while the recorded sorrows

of a Belfield or a Rushbrook, draw tears of pity from me as I read.

At length we began to think of rest. The children gave me their pallet: I threw myself upon it without undressing, and they nestled among some musty straw.

In the morning we presented a most dismal group. Not a morsel was for breakfast, and no means of obtaining any. The grey cripple, who had expected some assistance from me, sat grunting in a corner; the children whimpered and shivered; and I began considering what mode of immediate subsistence I ought to adopt. At last I hit upon a most pleasing and simple plan. As some days must elapse between my writing to Jerry Sullivan and his coming down (for I shall have him

here if possible), I mean to remain at the cottage, till his arrival; and to go forth every day in the character of a beggar-girl. Like another Rosa, I will earn my bread by asking alms. Even the shrivelled palm of age will expand at my supplication, and youths, offering compliments with eleemosynary silver, will call me the lovely vagabond, or the mendicant angel. Thus my few days of beggary will prove quite delightful; and oh, how sweet, when these are over, to reward and patronize, as Lady of the Castle, those hospitable cottagers, who have pitied and sheltered me as the beggar-girl.

But my first step was a letter to Jerry Sullivan; and fortunately, I found the stump of a pen, some thick ink, and coarse paper, in the cottage. I send

you a copy, that you may form some notion of my present projects.

“ Honest Jerry,

“ Since I saw you last, I have established all my claims, and am now the Lady Cherubina de Willoughby, illustrious mistress of Gwyn Castle, Monkton Castle, and other estates. If you feel grateful for those services, however trivial, which you once received from me, you will, doubtless, be happy at an opportunity of obliging me in return; and, as I mean to make Monkton Castle (which is now uninhabited), my future residence, and to furnish it in the style of those times when it was built, you will bespeak, at the best shops, such articles as I shall enumerate.



“ 1st. Antique tapestry for one entire wing.

“ 2nd. Painted glass, enriched with armorial bearings.

“ 3rd. Pennons and flags, stained with the best old blood; Feudal, if possible.

“ 4th. Black feathers, and black cloaks for liveries.

“ 5th. An old lute, or lyre, or harp.

“ 6th. Black hangings, black curtains, and a black velvet pall.

“ 7th. A Warder's trumpet.

“ 8th. A bell for the portal.

“ Besides these, I shall want antique pictures, chairs, tables, beds; and, in a word, every possible pin's worth and cast-off of old castles.

“ You must also purchase a handsome barouche, and four horses; and

by merely mentioning my name (the Lady Cherubina de Willoughby, of Monkton Castle), and by shewing this letter, no shopkeeper or mechanic will refuse you credit for any thing. Tell them that I will pass bills, as soon as the several articles arrive.

“ I have now to make a proposal, which, I hope and trust, Jerry, will meet your approbation. Your present business does not appear prosperous: all the offices in my castle are still unoccupied, and as I entertain the highest opinion of your discretion and honesty, the situation of Warden (a most ostensible one), is at your service. The salary shall be two hundred per annum. Consider of it.

“ You might travel down in the barouche, and bring some of the smaller

articles with you. Do not delay beyond three days.

“ CHERUBINA DE WILLOUGHBY.

“ *Monkton Castle.*”

I now began to think that I should also summon, upon this important occasion, the assistance of other friends: and accordingly, wrote a few lines to Higginson.

“ Dear Sir,

“ Intending to take immediate possession of Monkton Castle, which has become mine by right of lineal descent; and wishing, in imitation of ancient times, for a wild and enthusiastic Minstrel, as part of my household, I acquaint you, that if you think such an office eligible, I shall be happy

to bestow it upon you, and to recompense your poetical services with an annual stipend of two hundred pounds.

“ Should this proposal prove acceptable, have the goodness to call on my trusty servant, Jerry Sullivan, St. Giles’s, and to accompany him down in my barouche.

“ CHERUBINA DE WILLOUGHBY.  
“ *Monkton Castle.*”

I then scribbled a billet to Montmorenci ;—ah, ask not why, but pity me. Yet mark how my burning pen can write ice.

“ My Lord,

“ Perfectly well assured that we shall not meet again ; but conceiving that you still feel some portion of interest in my

welfare, I take the liberty to acquaint you, that my birth and pretensions are already acknowledged by Lady Gwyn, and that I am assembling my friends in Monkton Castle, where I shall reside for the future.

“ With sentiments of respect and esteem,

“ I have the honour to be,

“ My Lord,

“ Your Lordship’s most obedient,

“ And most humble servant,

“ CHERUBINA DE WILLOUGHBY.

“ *Monkton Castle.*”

Now this is precisely the formal sort of letter which a heroine sometimes indites to her lover: he cannot, for the soul of him, tell why; so down he comes, all distracted in a postchaise, and makes such a dishevelled entrance,

hands over a few faded embers. I begged permission to rest myself for a short time: the woman, after eyeing me keenly, consented, and I sat down. I then entered into conversation, represented myself as a wandering stranger in distress, and inquired whether I could procure a lodging about the neighbourhood. The woman assured me that I could not; and on perceiving me much disconcerted at the disappointment, coarsely, but cordially, offered me accommodation in her hut. I had no possible alternative; so the fire was replenished, some brown bread and sour milk (the last of their store), produced; and while we sat round this unsavoury supper, I requested of the poor woman to relate her little history.

She told me, with many tears and episodes, that her daughter and son-in-law, who had hitherto supported her, died of a fever, about a month ago, and left these children behind, without any means of subsistence, except what they procured from the charitable.

Indeed, their appearances corroborated this account ; for Famine had set her meagre finger on their faces. I wished to pity them, but their whining, their dirtiness, and their vulgarity, disgusted more than interested me. I nauseated the brats, and abhorred the haggard hostess. How it happens, I know not, but the misery that looks alluring on paper, is almost always repulsive in real life. I turn with distaste from a ragged beggar, or a distressed tradesman ; while the recorded sorrows

of a Belfield or a Rushbrook, draw tears of pity from me as I read.

At length we began to think of rest. The children gave me their pallet: I threw myself upon it without undressing, and they nestled among some musty straw.

In the morning we presented a most dismal group. Not a morsel was for breakfast, and no means of obtaining any. The grey cripple, who had expected some assistance from me, sat grunting in a corner; the children whimpered and shivered; and I began considering what mode of immediate subsistence I ought to adopt. At last I hit upon a most pleasing and simple plan. As some days must elapse between my writing to Jerry Sullivan and his coming down (for I shall have him



here if possible), I mean to remain at the cottage, till his arrival; and to go forth every day in the character of a beggar-girl. Like another Rosa, I will earn my bread by asking alms. Even the shrivelled palm of age will expand at my supplication, and youths, offering compliments with eleemosynary silver, will call me the lovely vagabond, or the mendicant angel. Thus my few days of beggary will prove quite delightful; and oh, how sweet, when these are over, to reward and patronize, as Lady of the Castle, those hospitable cottagers, who have pitied and sheltered me as the beggar-girl.

But my first step was a letter to Jerry Sullivan; and fortunately, I found the stump of a pen, some thick ink, and coarse paper, in the cottage. I send

you a copy, that you may form some notion of my present projects.

“ Honest Jerry,

“ Since I saw you last, I have established all my claims, and am now the Lady Cherubina de Willoughby, illustrious mistress of Gwyn Castle, Monkton Castle, and other estates. If you feel grateful for those services, however trivial, which you once received from me, you will, doubtless, be happy at an opportunity of obliging me in return; and, as I mean to make Monkton Castle (which is now uninhabited), my future residence, and to furnish it in the style of those times when it was built, you will bespeak, at the best shops, such articles as I shall enumerate.

“ 1st. Antique tapestry for one entire wing.

“ 2nd. Painted glass, enriched with armorial bearings.

“ 3rd. Pennons and flags, stained with the best old blood; Feudal, if possible.

“ 4th. Black feathers, and black cloaks for liveries.

“ 5th. An old lute, or lyre, or harp.

“ 6th. Black hangings, black curtains, and a black velvet pall.

“ 7th. A Warder's trumpet.

“ 8th. A bell for the portal.

“ Besides these, I shall want antique pictures, chairs, tables, beds; and, in a word, every possible pin's worth and cast-off of old castles.

“ You must also purchase a handsome barouche, and four horses; and

round me,—such passing and repassing, rustling and rushing, that I gave myself over as lost.

“ Oh, gentlemen-banditti !” cried I, “ spare my life, I beseech of you !”

They did not answer a syllable, but retired to some corner, where they held a horrid silence.

In a few minutes, I heard steps outside ; and then two persons entered the building.

“ This shelters us well enough,” said one of them.

“ Curse on the storm,” cried the other, “ it will hinder any more from coming out to-night. However we have killed four already, and, please goodness, not one will be alive on the estate this day month.”

Oh, Biddy, how my soul sickened

at the shocking reflection, that four of an estated family were already murdered in cold blood ; and that the remainder would share the same fate before a month.

Unable to contain myself, I muttered:— “ Mercy upon me ! ”

“ Did you hear that ? ” whispered one of the men.

“ I did,” said the other. “ Off with us this moment ! ” and off they ran.

I too determined to quit this nest of horrors, for my very life appeared in danger ; so, rising, I began to grope my way towards the door, when I fell over something that lay upon the ground, and as I put out my hand, I touched, (oh, horrible ! ) a dead, cold, damp human face ! Instantly the thought struck me that this was one of the

four whom the ruffians had murdered, and I flung myself from it, with a shiver of horror ; but in doing so, laid my hand upon another face ; while a faint gleam of lightning, which flashed at the moment, shewed me two bodies, ghastly, haggard, naked, and half covered with straw.

I started up, screaming, and made a desperate effort to reach the door ; but just as I was darting out of it, I found my shoulder griped with a ferocious grasp.

“ I have caught one of them,” cried the person. “ Fetch the lantern.”

“ I am innocent of the murder !” cried I. “ I swear to you that I am !”

“ Who ? what murder ?” cried he. “ Hollo, help ! here is murder !”

“ Not by me !” cried I. “ Not by

me ! No, no, my hands are unstained with their blood.”

And now a lantern being brought, I perceived several servants in liveries, who first examined my features, and then dragged me back into the building. The building ! And what was the building, think you ? Why nothing more than the shell of an unfinished house,—a mere modern morsel of a tasty temple ! And what were the banditti who had knocked me down, think you ? Why nothing more than a few harmless sheep, that now lay huddled together in a corner ! And what were the two corpses, think you ? Why nothing more than two Heathen statues for the temple !—And the ruffians who talked of their having killed, and having to kill, were only poachers, who had

killed four hares, and whom the servants were waylaying when they seized me. Here then was the whole mystery developed, and a great deal of good fright gone for nothing.

However, the servants, swearing that I was either concerned with the poachers, or with the murder that I talked of, dragged me down a shrubbery, till we reached a large mansion. We then entered a lighted hall; one of them went to call his master; and after a few minutes, an elderly gentleman, with a troop of young men and women at his heels, came out of a parlour.

“Young woman, what murder is this you were talking of?” said the gentleman to me.

“I will tell you with pleasure,”



answered I. "You must know that I am a wandering beggar, without home, parents, or friends; and when the storm began, I ran, for shelter, into the young ladies' Temple of Taste, as your servants nicknamed it. So, thinking it a castle, and some sheep which threw me down, banditti, and a couple of statues, corpses; of course I naturally imagined, when two men entered, and began to talk of having killed something, that they meant these very corpses. And so that is the plain and simple narrative of the whole affair."

To my surprize, a general burst of laughter ran round the hall.

"Sheep banditti, and statues corpses! Dear me,—Bless me!" tittered the misses.

"Young woman," said the gentle-

man, "your incoherent account inclines me to believe you concerned in some atrocious transaction, which I must make my business to discover."

"I am sure," said a young lady, "she carries the gallows in her face."

"Then 'tis so pretty a gallows," said a young gentleman, "that I wish I were hanging upon it."

"Fie, brother," said the young lady, "how can you talk so to a murderess?"

"And how can you talk so," cried I, "before you know that I am a murderess? Is it just, is it generous, is it feminine? Men impelled by love, may deprive our sex of virtue; but we ourselves, actuated by the rancorous passions, rob each other of character."

“ Oh ! indeed,” said the young lady, “ ’tis now plain to see what you are. That sentence of morality has settled you completely.”

“ Then I presume you do not admire morality,” said I.

“ Not from the lips of a mean creature like you,” said she.

“ Yet, know, young woman,” cried I, “ that the current which runs through these veins, is registered in hereditary heraldry.”

The company gave a most disgusting laugh.

“ It is,” cried I, “ I tell you it is. I tell you I am of the blood noble.”

“ Oh blood !” squeaked a young gentleman.

What wonder that I forgot my prudence amidst these indignities ? Yes,

the proud spirit of my progenitors swelled my heart, all my house stirred within me, and the blood of the De Willoughbys rose into my face, as I drew the picture from my bosom, pointed a quivering finger at it, and exclaimed :

“ Behold the portrait of my titled mother ! ”

“ See, see ! ” cried the girls crowding round. “ ’Tis covered all over with diamonds ! ”

“ There ! ” said I. “ There is proof irrefragable for you ! ”

“ Proof enough to hang you ? ” cried the old gentleman, snatching it out of my hand. “ So now, my lady, you must go, this moment, before the magistrate. ” I began weeping, kneeling, and entreating ; till I found that

his son, the young man who had paid my face the compliment, was to take charge of my person; so then, speculating upon a speedy deliverance, I submitted without another murmur; and escorted by him and a footman, left the house.

After we had proceeded about half a mile, the young man stopped, and whispered something to the servant, who instantly disappeared.

“Now,” said the young man, “whether you are a pilferer of pictures, I know not; but this I know, that you are a pilferer of hearts; and I am determined to keep you in custody, till you restore mine, which you have stolen. To be plain, I intend extricating you from your present emergency, and concealing you in a cottage, till

to-morrow, when I will call, and have some further conversation with you."

I replied that I trusted he would not find me deficient in gratitude.

"Thank you;" said he. "And now here is the cottage."

He then tapped at a door: an elderly woman opened it, and on entering, I perceived a girl, with a bold, but handsome face, hastily adjusting her cap.

"Here is a wretched creature," said he, "whom I found starving on the road. Pray give her some refreshment, and a bed for the night."

The women looked at me, and then at each other.

"She shall have no bed in my house," said the elder, "for I warrant this is the hussey who has lately been setting

you against Susan, and telling you lies about Tommy Hicks's visiting her."

"Ay, and Bob Saunders," cried the daughter.

"Sweet innocent!" cried the mother.

"And Ebenezer Solomons," cried the daughter.

"Tender lamb!" cried the mother.

"And Patrick O'Brien," cried the daughter.

"Think of that!" cried the mother.

"Yes, think of that!" cried the daughter. "Patrick O'Brien! the broad-shouldered, abominable man! Oh! I will cut my throat—I will—so I will!"

The whole truth now flashed upon

me. Here then, if I minded my hits, was another exquisite episode. Yes, I would separate Susan from her seducer, and secure her everlasting gratitude. The reclaimed wanton might yet do wonders for me.

“ Alas !” said I, “ behold the fatal effects of licentious love. This girl, whom your money, perhaps, allured from the paths of virtue—”

“ Oh ! no,” cried Susan, “ it was his honour’s handsome face, and his fine words, so bleeding and so sore ; and he called me an angel above the heavens !”

“ Yes,” resumed I, “ it is the tenderness of youth, the smile of joy, the blush of innocence, which allure the libertine ; and yet these are what he would destroy. It is the heart of sen-



sibility which he would engage, and yet in that heart he would plant every rankling pang, every bitter misery. Detestable passion! which accomplishes the worst of purposes, by touching the best and sweetest affections. She whose mind ascribes to others the motives that actuate itself; she who confides, because she would not herself deceive, she who has a tear for real grief, and who melts at the simulated miseries of her lover, falls a sacrifice to his arts; while the cold vestal who walks through the world, armed with austerity, repulses his approaches with indignation, and calls her prudence virtue."

The young man gazed upon me with surprise, and the mother came closer; but Susan was peeping at her face in the glass.

“Look on that beautiful girl before you,” cried I. “Heaven itself is not brighter than her brow; the tints of the morning cannot rival her blushes.”

Susan held down her head, but cast a quick glance at the 'squire.

“Such is she now;” continued I, “but too soon we may behold her, pale, shivering, unsteady of step, and hoarse with nocturnal curses, one of those unhappy thousands, who strew our streets with the premature ruins of dilapidated beauty!”

“Yes, look at her!” cried the mother, who, flushing even through her wrinkles, and quivering in every limb, rushed towards her daughter, and snatching off her cap, bared her forehead. “Look at her! she was once my lovely pride, the blessing of my

heart ; and see what he has now made her ; while I, miserable as I am, must assist her guilt, that I may save her from disgrace and ruin !”

“ Oh ! then,” cried I, turning to the ’squire, “ while still some portion of her fame remains, fly from her, fly for ever !”

“ Upon my soul, I mean to do so,” replied he, “ so pray make your mind easy.”

“ And I am convinced, Susan,” said I, “ that you feel grateful for the pains which I have taken, to withdraw the ’squire from a connection so fatal.”

“ I am quite sure I do,” cried Susan, “ and I will pray for your health and happiness while I live. But, since I must lose him, I hope you

will persuade him to leave me some money first; not that I ever valued him for his money; but you know, I could not see my mother go without her tea o' nights."

"Amiable creature!" cried I, "Yes I will intercede for you."

"My giving you money," said the 'squire, "will depend upon my finding, when I return to-morrow, that you have treated this girl kindly to-night."

"I will treat her like a sister," said Susan.

The 'squire now declared that he must depart; then taking me aside, "I shall see you early in the morning; whispered he, "and remove you elsewhere. You have talked virtue to a miracle. Continue the system, and these people will fancy you a saint."

I then overheard him enjoin the mother, as she valued his future favour, not to let me quit the Cottage ; and with this injunction, he went away.

But as I had not the most remote intention of awaiting his return, I set my wits at work, and soon hit upon a plan to accomplish my escape. I told the woman that my mother, who lived about a mile from the cottage, was almost starving ; and that if I could procure a little silver, and a loaf of bread, I would run to her hut with the relief, and come back immediately.

The kind eagerness, the sweet solicitude, which mother and daughter manifested, in loading me with victuals and money, were most gratifying. Suffice it, that they gave me two shillings, some bread, tea, and sugar ; and

Susan herself offered to carry them ; but this favour I declined ; and now, with a secret sigh at the probability that I might never see them again, I left their house, and hastened towards the cottage of the poor woman. Having reached it, I made the hungry inhabitants happy once more ; while I so- laced myself with some tea, and the pleasing reflection, that I had brought comfort to the distress, and had re- claimed a deluded girl from ruin and infamy.

Adieu.

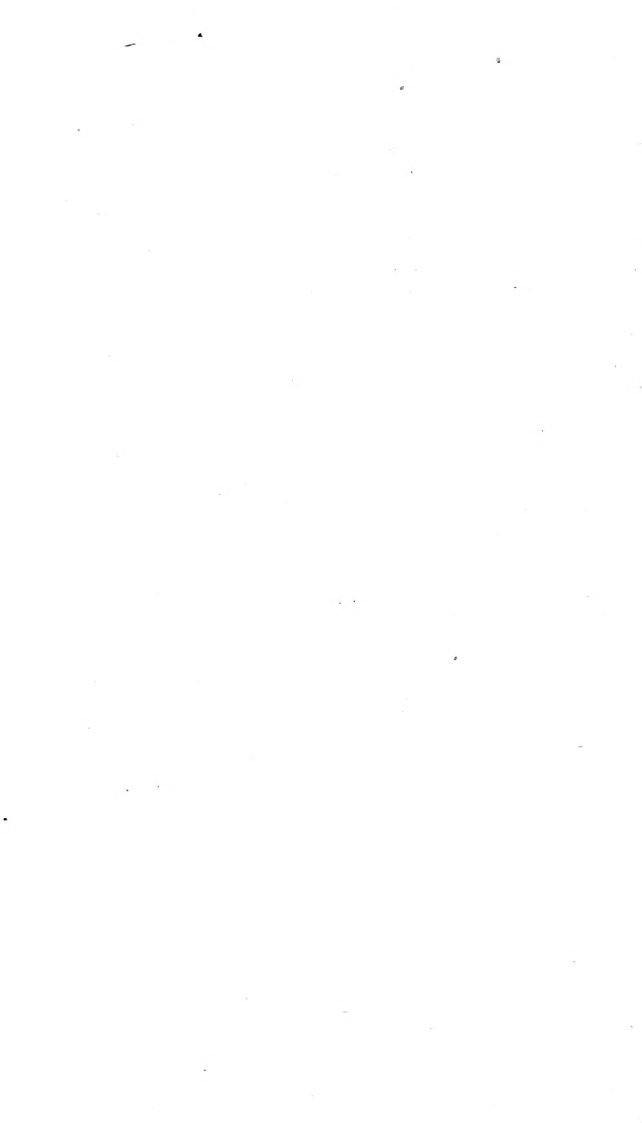
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